



Hegel and Feminist Philosophy

KIMBERLY HUTCHINGS

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Kimberly Hutchings

polity

*This book is dedicated to the memory of
Gillian Rose 1947–95*

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Preface

This is a relatively short book, but it is the product of a very long gestation period. I first encountered the work of Hegel as a post-graduate student twenty years ago. At the time at which I first read Hegel, I was already a feminist but it did not occur to me that there could be any philosophical relation between my feminism and Hegel's thought, of either a positive or negative kind. It was almost a decade later before I became aware that to many feminist philosophers, feminism and Hegelianism were antithetical mutually exclusive philosophical positions. From that time I have been preoccupied with the question of what kind of sense I can make of my own commitment to both feminism and Hegelianism. This is a question which clearly entails reflection on the meaning of both terms and therefore opens up many more questions connected to ongoing debates about what it means to be either a Hegelian or a feminist. Writing this book gave me the chance to reflect on these questions more thoroughly and systematically and to offer an account of how and why I think Hegel can be a useful resource for feminists. I am profoundly grateful to have been given this opportunity. However, I remain aware that what I offer is an understanding of Hegelian and feminist philosophy that many feminist and other philosophers would contest with vigour. According to my own reading of Hegel's account of the claims of philosophers, what follows in this book is a reflection of my own partial self-understanding, which may or may not invoke recognition in the reader. I am conscious in particular of the irony that the most significant influence on my study of Hegel's work, Gillian Rose, would have been highly unlikely to identify with my perception of the need to defend Hegelianism both against and on behalf of feminist

philosophy. Nevertheless, it is to her memory that this book is dedicated.

I would like to record my thanks to the two anonymous readers of the manuscript of this book. They pointed out many unclarities and errors in my analysis and there is no doubt that it is a much better book as a consequence of their intervention. Thanks are also due to Polity Press, both for giving me the opportunity to write the book and for patience in the face of delays in its completion. The actual writing of the book had to be done in my spare time over the past three years. I am therefore deeply grateful for the understanding and support of my friends and family during a very stressful time; without them the Owl of Minerva would definitely never have got off the ground. Needless to say, any errors in the text which follows are my responsibility alone.

Kimberly Hutchings
Edinburgh

Introduction

In this book I examine the philosophical connections and debates between Hegelian thought and feminist philosophy. Hegel is a significant reference point for many feminist philosophers and there is already a considerable body of feminist scholarship which engages with Hegel. However, it is not my intention simply to catalogue ways in which Hegel figures in different feminist philosophical arguments. Over and above this, I seek to demonstrate that Hegel's thought has something to contribute to significant philosophical arguments within feminism over sexual difference, epistemology and moral and political theory.¹ The fulfilment of this aim clearly requires both the articulation of a particular perspective within feminist philosophy and a specific interpretation of Hegel's thought. Feminist philosophy is not a uniform body of thought and my characterization of feminist debates will reflect a perspective which some feminist philosophers would want to reject. Similarly, my interpretation of Hegel is a contestable, left-Hegelian one with which other feminist philosophers and Hegelian scholars will disagree.² This means that the persuasiveness of any of the arguments which follow depends on the extent to which readers recognize and identify with the kind of feminist philosophy and the kind of Hegelian philosophy which I seek to articulate and defend. I should make it clear at the outset, however, that I am not arguing that Hegel himself was in any sense a feminist. It is patently obvious from his own remarks on sexual difference that, even in the context of his own time, Hegel's attitude to women was patriarchal and at times misogynist. If Hegel's work is useful to feminist philosophers it is in spite of his own ideological position on the 'woman question'.³

Hegel famously complained of the inability of Prefaces or Introductions to accomplish the intellectual journey on which a book is designed to take a reader. In line with this complaint, in this Introduction I can only assert as an abstract promise claims about feminist philosophy and Hegel which the argument of the book as a whole will be concerned to redeem. At the heart of my argument is the claim that Hegel is battling with the same conceptual conundrum which is constitutive of feminist philosophy within the Western tradition. This is the conundrum of how to escape the conceptual binary oppositions (between culture and nature, reason and emotion, autonomy and heteronomy, universal and particular, ideal and real) which have associated women with the denigrated term and prescribed the exclusion of women from the practices of both philosophy and politics. As I expound it, feminist philosophy can be defined as a project to think the world differently, but one which is forever prey to a tendency to lapse back into the terms it is seeking to transcend. This is particularly clear in debates internal to feminist philosophy, in which the difficulty of 'thinking differently' becomes apparent in feminist characterizations of opposing positions. I argue that Hegel prefigures the reductive pattern of internal philosophical debates within feminism in his account of the temptations of modern thought to lapse into one-sidedness and exclusivity in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic*. In addition, I argue that Hegel provides a resource for resisting the temptations of modernist transcendence, through his insistence on the inseparability of being from truth and his historicization of both being and truth. Having made this argument, I put forward an account of its implications for feminist ontology, epistemology and moral and political theory. The later part of the book attempts to show how a Hegelian feminism would respond to contemporary feminist debates about knowledge, morality and politics.

The argument which follows is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 puts forward an account of feminist philosophy as a response to the explicit and implicit masculinism of the philosophical tradition. It is claimed that this masculinism is inherent in the hierarchical binary oppositions which have underpinned the conceptual framework of mainstream Western thought. Feminist philosophy is therefore largely preoccupied with developing frameworks for thought which do not repeat the hierarchical binaries of the tradition. An important aspect of feminist attempts to re-think established philosophical conceptual frameworks has been engaging with canonic philosophical texts. Within this engagement I suggest that different pathways for feminist philosophy can be discerned, some of which reject the philosophical

tradition altogether and some of which 'collaborate' with it. On this basis, I distinguish between four different ideal types of feminist philosophy. These ideal types are labelled: *rationalist*; *critical*; *sexual difference*; and *postmodernist*. As with any ideal types, these modes of feminist thought are rarely completely distinguishable in practice, but nevertheless this classification provides a tool for analysing the logic of feminist philosophical debate. I then go on to demonstrate this logic through the examination of three significant areas of feminist philosophical inquiry in epistemology, moral philosophy and political theory. The chapter concludes that feminist philosophy is caught in a struggle with the binary thinking which it aims to overcome yet which it finds difficult to escape. I suggest that this pattern is reminiscent of the 'way of despair' chronicled in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and turn to the exploration of this claim in chapter 2.

Chapter 2 offers an interpretation of Hegel's philosophy as a response to the problems of binary thinking which have been intensified, Hegel argues, in the turn to transcendence which is characteristic of modernity. This is a turn which Hegel associates particularly with Kant's critical philosophy and the principles underpinning the French revolutionary terror. My account of Hegel treats the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic* as the key to Hegel's philosophical approach. In addition, it offers a brief exposition of Hegel's philosophies of nature and right which have been important to feminist engagements with Hegel's work. In the final section the argument returns to the domain of feminist philosophy and an overview of the ways in which Hegel's work has been read by feminist thinkers. It is argued that for rationalist feminists, Hegel's work is of limited philosophical interest. However, for critical, sexual difference and postmodernist categories of feminist philosophy Hegel's work has figured as an important interlocutor. This latter claim is the focus of the following chapters, which seek to show both how certain feminist philosophers have used Hegel and how Hegel may be more useful to feminist philosophy than even those who engage constructively with his work generally acknowledge.

In chapter 3, the focus is on the work of Beauvoir and the uneasy relation to Hegelianism in both *Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*. It is argued that Hegel's account of the emergence of self-conscious being in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* might have been more useful to Beauvoir's argument than is explicit in her texts, if her encounter with Hegel had not been so decisively mediated by the contestable readings of Hegel offered by Sartre and Kojève of the 'struggle for recognition'. I argue that an alternative Hegelianism is

discernible in Beauvoir's phenomenology of women's subject position in *The Second Sex* and the way in which it (women's subject position) figures as an impossible identity of subject and object and of self and other. Chapter 4 explores how the ways in which feminist philosophy moves beyond Beauvoir in critical, sexual difference and postmodernist directions continue to formulate arguments in part in relation to Hegel's work. In Beauvoir's case it is Hegel's story of the emergence of self-consciousness, and in particular of the 'struggle for recognition', which is central to the interpretation and significance of Hegel. For the thinkers explored in chapter 4, Patricia Mills, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler, it is the story of Sophocles' *Antigone* (both the play and Antigone the character) retold by Hegel in the *Phenomenology* which becomes the crucial point of encounter between feminists and Hegel. In the case of all the feminist philosophers discussed in chapters 3 and 4, the crux of their engagement with Hegel is connected with the way he explains the position of women in his account of the mediation between the realms of nature (organic, animal being) and spirit (self-determination) in the *Phenomenology*. I argue that in each case there are problems with the way in which Hegel is interpreted. These problems are important not simply because Hegel can be interpreted differently, but because they are philosophically significant for the tendency of debates between feminist philosophical positions to return to the logic of the 'way of despair' set out in chapter 1. The last section of chapter 4 fleshes out the claim repeatedly made in the preceding analysis, that my alternative interpretation of Hegelian philosophy can be used as a resource for addressing ongoing debates in feminist philosophy concerned with the ontology of sexual difference and its implications for feminist claims to truth. It is argued that Hegel offers an escape from the 'way of despair' via a radical historicization of accounts of both being and truth.

The argument of chapters 5 and 6 explores the implications of the feminist Hegelianism articulated in chapter 4 for moral and political agency and judgement. Chapter 5 examines the recent trajectory of work in feminist ethics following Gilligan's intervention and the introduction of the idea of an 'ethic of care', with the ensuing debate over 'care' versus 'justice'. A variety of theoretical positions are explored, in particular those of Elisabeth Porter and Rosalind Diprose who represent critical (Porter) and postmodernist (Diprose) modes of feminist philosophy respectively, and who are both concerned to move beyond the care versus justice debate. It is argued that this move entails a radical shift in the ambitions of moral philosophy, which is not fully accomplished by either Porter or Diprose themselves. However,

both Porter and Diprose articulate their own positions partly via a reading of Hegel which is used as a prompt to examine Hegel's critique of what he terms the 'moral point of view' and to assess the extent to which Hegel may be useful in drawing out the implications of the critique of the either/or of care versus justice which Porter and Diprose are anxious to transcend. An account is given of Hegelian ethics, and strong parallels are found between this and the kind of moral philosophy championed by the feminist philosopher Margaret Urban Walker. This approach to moral theory abandons the invocation of a privileged ground for moral judgement and prescription, encouraging the feminist moral philosopher to concentrate on phenomenological adequacy and genealogical honesty in accounting for moral claims and goals. In conclusion, I argue that this kind of development within feminist moral theory does not preclude critique and commitment to transformative political goals, but it does preclude the invocation of a moral high ground as a short cut to definitive judgement and prescription. Crucial to this development is a shift of the ground of authority of moral claims to the relations of recognition between the philosopher, the object of moral concern and the recipients of the philosopher's judgement. This means that moral judgement can never be anything other than risky.

In the course of the exploration of both feminist and Hegelian ethics in chapter 5 it becomes clear that both approaches to moral theory problematize distinctions between the realms of morality and politics. Chapter 6 turns explicitly to feminist political theory and the question of how women's position within the liberal state is to be understood, judged and challenged. The argument focuses on evaluating the contributions to addressing this question in the work of Carole Pateman and Catharine MacKinnon respectively. I argue that there is a fundamental ambiguity in both Pateman's and MacKinnon's arguments about the meaning of what Pateman defines as 'the sexual contract'. In both cases the contract is presented as simultaneously oppressive *and* as offering possibilities for resistance and political transformation. It is argued that Hegel's account of women's position in the modern state in the *Elements of Philosophy of Right* helps to explain the ambiguities diagnosed in Pateman's and MacKinnon's analyses. Moreover, Hegel's argument also helps to articulate a way forward for feminist political philosophy which involves the strategic mobilization of the normative resources of the liberal state. The kinds of practical implications this entails are spelled out in relation to ongoing debates within feminist political theory about conceptions of citizenship and political agency both within and across the boundaries

of the liberal state. The conclusion to the book comprises a brief set of reflections on the characteristics of Hegelian feminism for which the book has been arguing. This is accomplished through examining the commonalities and differences between Hegelian feminism and the other trajectories of feminist philosophy with which the book has been mostly concerned (critical, sexual difference and postmodernist feminisms). The book concludes with the claim that Hegelian feminist philosophy is distinguished by its focus on a phenomenological project of comprehension, by its modesty concerning the status of its own philosophical claims and by a this-worldly ethics and politics.

1

Feminist Philosophy and the Way of Despair

Introduction

Feminist philosophy is preoccupied with a range of common philosophical questions about being and truth, goodness and justice. However, the perspective of feminist philosophy on what is relevant to understanding and addressing this range of questions is distinctive. Feminist philosophers are interested in how sexed or gendered modes of thought have been complicit in constructing the form and substance of questions and answers about being, truth, goodness and justice which are explored in the philosophical tradition.¹ This interest has two dimensions. In the first place, it is an interest in exposing the way in which gender bias operates in mainstream philosophy. In the second place, it is an interest in examining the ways in which understandings (not necessarily articulated) of sex or gender may either help or hinder both philosophical inquiry and the achievement of the goals of feminist politics. In what follows, I will seek to demonstrate certain persistent patterns of feminist philosophical debate. In section 1.1, I examine how feminist philosophy has responded to the modern (post-seventeenth-century) Western philosophical tradition and suggest that we can discern four ideal types of feminist philosophy which emerge from this engagement: *rationalist*, *critical*, *sexual difference* and *postmodernist*. Each of these pathways within feminist philosophy depends on a response to the conceptual framework of mainstream philosophy and its association of female or feminine qualities with the denigrated pair of a mutually exclusive binary opposition. This means that the diverse directions of feminist philosophy hinge on the question of how the categories of 'women', 'sex' and 'gender' are understood. In sections 1.2, 1.3 and

1.4, I trace the implications of these different philosophical routes in debates within feminist philosophy over the conditions of possibility of claims to knowledge, moral and political agency and judgement. It will be argued that what emerges from this overview confirms the ways in which feminist philosophical consciousness is perpetually caught in exposing the inadequacy, but also the apparent inescapability, of the hierarchical binary oppositions in relation to which its thinking is always oriented. This conclusion forms the bridge to chapter 2, in which it will be argued that the patterns of thinking within feminist philosophy display parallels with what Hegel termed the 'way of despair' which consciousness follows in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and which defines the terms of his own philosophical project (Hegel, 1977: 49).

1.1 Thinking as a Feminist

Feminist philosophy in the Western academy begins in reaction to contemporary philosophy and its apparent denial of the relevance of sex and gender to philosophical reason. Feminist philosophers were suspicious of this denial, given the absence of women from the philosophical academy and of concerns particularly relevant to women from the substantive philosophical agenda. The suspicion was that behind this silence and absence lay an actual denigration and consequent exclusion of women from philosophical reason and therefore from the category of the fully human. For feminist philosophers, the re-interpretation of the canonic tradition has been a crucial route into interrogating the way in which presumptions about sex and gender have in fact been complicit in constructing the agenda of modern philosophy. Feminist readers have gone back to trace the appearances of women, sex and gender in the work of canonic thinkers from Plato to Marx in order to uncover the gendered subtext of apparently gender-neutral philosophical thought. Feminist readings of canonic thinkers have brought to light the way in which the binary conceptual oppositions which are central to Western philosophy are also gendered, with certain categories being consistently male- and others female-identified. The categories associated with the male side within the philosophical tradition are normally identified as superior to those associated with the female. Standard examples of this binary conceptual hierarchy include the following (privileged term first in each case): culture/nature; mind/body; form/matter; reason/emotion; universal/particular; transcendent/immanent; ideal/real; truth/opinion;

absolute/relative. Men are associated with that which is self-determining, spiritual and rational. Women are associated with that which is natural, uncontrollable, fleshy and irrational. These are the characteristics which, since Plato, have been identified as the opposite of those associated with capacity to do philosophy.²

One of the most shocking 'discoveries' in the feminist re-reading of the philosophical tradition was the extent to which canonic modern thinkers, such as Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Marx, with few exceptions, continued to perpetuate patriarchal assumptions about women, sex and gender. The hierarchical conceptual binaries of the pre-modern philosophical tradition did not disappear but were re-cast in terms which continued to associate the male with reason, universality, autonomy and culture (progress) and the female with emotion, particularity, heteronomy and nature (stasis). This was shocking because of the historical roots of feminist ideology in liberal and socialist ideas which were formulated by these thinkers and which feminists had drawn on to underpin their own political struggles. Enlightenment conceptions of reason, individual rights, freedom, historical progress and moral universalism were crucial to feminist accounts of women's oppression and emancipation, from Wollstonecraft onwards (Wollstonecraft, 1975). Increasingly, therefore, the question for feminist readers of canonic texts became one of *whether* and if so *how* it was possible to work both with and against the grain of the modern philosophical tradition. The answer to this clearly depends on the extent to which understandings of women, sex and gender in the canonic texts of Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Marx are structurally significant for their thought as such. In attempting to work this out, feminist philosophers are obliged to go beyond identifying explicit or implicit misogyny within philosophy. They have to address the question of whether women, sex and gender are necessarily or contingently philosophically significant (that is to say, significant as conditions of possibility for thought) both in the work of canonic philosophers and in their own responses to it.

One of the most influential attempts to categorize the nature of feminist interpretations of canonic texts is Seyla Benhabib's 'On Hegel, Women and Irony' (1996a: 25–7). In this essay Benhabib makes a distinction between feminist readings in terms of the paradigms of the 'good father', 'the rebellious daughter' and a 'feminist discourse of empowerment'. Her concern is particularly with feminist readings of enlightenment texts which are ethically and politically universalist yet which denigrate, exclude or marginalize women. The 'good father' reading treats lapses of universalism in such texts regarding the

treatment of women, sex and gender as contingent, philosophically insignificant error. The failure of the philosopher to include women within the category of humanity is excused on grounds of historical context explaining the author's bias. This means that the feminist philosopher can still operate with the same conceptual framework as the particular thinker in question. In contrast to this, the 'rebellious daughter' interpretation is one in which the reader sees the treatment of women, sex and gender as fundamental to the philosopher's argument and as therefore undermining its authority for feminists. This kind of reading, according to Benhabib, rejects the authority of canonic texts and turns to the construction of a different kind of discourse, grounded on an alternative feminist or feminine authority.

In the third 'feminist empowerment' type of interpretation, the meaning of the text is judged not simply in terms of the current preoccupations of feminist readers and the extent to which the text in question underpins or undermines contemporary feminist agendas, but also in relation to its historical context. Thus the question for the feminist reader becomes not just how the text invokes, excludes or relies on conceptions of women, sex and gender in general but, more specifically, the question of its import for women in the context in which the text was published. Benhabib's preference is for the third type of reading. She stresses the importance for feminist readers of grasping an author's concepts as a practical intervention in a discursive context within which those concepts will have effects.³ The extent to which an argument will have conservative (counter-enlightenment) or emancipatory implications depends on the philosopher's ethical universalism. Benhabib is critical of 'good father' readings because they overlook the substantive effects of the treatment of sex and gender from the viewpoint of the 'victim' and thereby misread the meaning of texts, which are actually ethically particularist even while they claim universalism. She is critical of 'rebellious daughter' readings because she rejects the grounding of interpretation and judgement in an ethically particularist feminist perspective. Her position is one which continues to hold onto universalist categories of enlightenment thought as an underpinning for feminist theoretical arguments against and practical resistance to women's oppression in the contemporary world. For Benhabib, the political and philosophical culpability of the canonic enlightenment philosopher depends on whether his apparent universalism disguises actual ethical particularism.⁴

Genevieve Lloyd provides an alternative approach to categorizing feminist interpretations of canonic philosophy (Lloyd, 2000). In the context of a broad discussion of the development of feminist reading

of the history of philosophy, Lloyd argues for what she sees as the most fruitful direction for future development. She begins by pointing to the fact that much initial feminist work on canonic philosophers was oppositional in character. Like Benhabib, however, she notes that the philosophical significance of canonic thinkers' misogyny is read differently by different types of feminists. So that some feminist ('good father') readers deplore the misogyny but defend the fundamental gender neutrality of the philosophical position of canonic thinkers; whereas other ('rebellious daughter') readers see this misogyny as necessitating the development of an alternative feminist philosophical position. Unlike Benhabib, however, Lloyd suggests that the significance of 'rebellious daughter' readings of canonic philosophy goes beyond the straightforward dismissal of masculinist thought. Benhabib identifies the rebellious daughter reading with psychoanalytic sexual difference feminism, in particular the work of Irigaray. Lloyd points out how the work of feminist readers such as Irigaray depends on immanent, deconstructive readings of texts, which play on the tensions, possibilities and limitations inherent in the texts themselves. The point then is not simply to judge the text from a feminist perspective, but to play off the internal tensions of the text in relation to the insights of the feminist reader in order to better understand the meaning and implications of sexual difference for doing philosophy. It is this, for Lloyd, which marks the positive philosophical potential of feminist engagement with canonic thinkers, a way forward between the 'good father' and 'rebellious daughter' alternatives which involves 'a collaborative positioning of the commentator in relation to the author' (Lloyd, 2000: 257). For Lloyd, however, it is crucial that feminist readers are self-reflective about their own practice in this collaboration. There is no stable feminist perspective from which to read and the philosophical implications of encounters between feminist readers and texts cannot be settled in advance.

Although both of them argue for a way forward for feminist philosophy which transcends Benhabib's 'good father' and 'rebellious daughter' options, Benhabib's and Lloyd's perspectives on feminist reading are quite different. The difference lies in the nature of their contrasting responses to the binary conceptual hierarchy which associates sexual difference between men and women with different qualities and capacities. More specifically, the difference lies in a different assessment of the potential for the conceptual legacy of modern, enlightenment, liberal and socialist thought to underpin feminist philosophy and politics. In general, I would argue that it is differing reactions to this conceptual legacy which explain the alternative pathways that feminist

philosophy has taken and which structures both feminist philosophy's engagement with mainstream thinking and the arguments that feminist philosophers have with each other. I will go on to suggest that, building on the analyses offered by Benhabib and Lloyd, we can identify four distinct 'ideal types' of feminist philosophy. This typology, as with any classification, risks over-simplification and distortion of a range of positions which rarely fall neatly into a single category.⁵ These are, however, generally recognizable trajectories of feminist thought and are labelled as follows: *rationalist*; *critical*; *sexual difference*; and *postmodernist*.

Rationalist feminist philosophy is the type of feminist philosophy which underpins 'good father' readings of the canonic texts of modern philosophy. It is distinguished by the common ground it shares with the ontological, epistemological and normative claims of enlightenment thought, more specifically of liberal enlightenment thought (Locke and Kant rather than Rousseau and Marx). The key ontological claim of rationalist feminism is that sexual difference as such is not significant in the sense of referring to any essential difference in capacities between men and women. To the extent that sexual difference is taken to be ontologically essential, rationalist feminists argue that this is due to the distorting effects of a patriarchal culture and philosophical tradition which have operated in the interests of men. The key epistemological claim of rationalist feminism is that truth depends on adequation to an independently existing reality. This adequation can be assured through a combination of rational argument, methodological sophistication and openness to empirical evidence. The sex of the knower is irrelevant to the validity or otherwise of knowledge claims. The key normative claim of rationalist feminism is that women are fully rational moral and political agents and are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as men. This normative claim is argued to be rationally and empirically justifiable on the grounds that women do not differ in any relevant respect from men. Feminist philosophy of the rationalist type can be found in feminist interventions in all branches of philosophical inquiry. It is characteristically inclusive in its ambitions, and is associated both with straightforward endorsement of mainstream arguments and their extension to women, and with the project of redressing patriarchal denigration of 'feminine' qualities which could complement and improve mainstream philosophy. For feminist rationalist philosophy, its project is necessitated by patriarchy and its relevance will wither away with patriarchy.⁶

Critical feminist philosophy has much in common with feminist rationalism in terms of its normative assumptions but differs in its

ontology and epistemological perspective. Like rationalists, critical feminists deny the essential significance of sexual difference and endorse the normative goals of equality and freedom as equally relevant to men and women. However, whereas rationalist feminists by and large accept mainstream assumptions about the nature of truth and knowledge and the disinterestedness of reason, critical feminists insist on a fundamental relation between rationality, knowledge and interests. Critical feminist philosophy appropriates aspects of the Hegelian-Marxist and Frankfurt School traditions of critical theory. According to these traditions, human beings are historically constructed through their relations to each other and their interaction with nature. Human action and reflection are always therefore mediated through social and material relations. Because of this, there is no 'innocent' access to knowledge of the world aside from one's position within it. Thus, it is argued that there is a distinction to be made between claims to truth articulated from the standpoint of those who benefit from any particular set of social and material relations, and claims to truth articulated from the standpoint of the victim of such relations. The difference in perspective, reflecting a difference in experience and therefore interests, is a difference in what can be seen and understood, and there is no Archimedean point which transcends all perspectives. However, it is assumed that those who suffer social and material oppression will have an interest in ending that oppression and that their perspective will therefore be oriented towards goals of equality and freedom. The latter becomes a normative guide to the assessment of philosophical argument for critical philosophers. Critical feminism is therefore particularly preoccupied with articulating understanding and judgement from a feminist standpoint. As with rationalist feminism, this involves drawing attention to the omissions of the philosophical mainstream. However, for critical feminists this goes beyond the correction of bias and is seen instead as part of a project of the transformation of social and material relations in the interests of the oppressed and excluded. Critical feminism can be distinguished into versions which stay closer to early Hegelian-Marxist and first-generation Frankfurt School thought and those which have been more profoundly influenced by Habermas. The former tend to be more focused on the connection between patriarchy and capitalism as modes of oppressive social relations and closer to socialist than to liberal ideology. The latter, like rationalist feminism, tends to be more optimistic about the potential of the liberal democratic state to enable the withering away of patriarchy.⁷

Sexual difference feminist philosophy is referred to by Benhabib under the 'rebellious daughter' heading and figures largely in Lloyd's account of the deconstructive turn taken by Irigaray's reading of the philosophical tradition. Both rationalist and critical feminist philosophy insist on the importance of gender as a transcendable socially constructed category which has no transhistorical grounding in biological sex or any other fixed 'essence' of women. This means that the philosophical significance of sex and gender is historically contingent and should ultimately give way to the inclusive category of humanity in philosophical argument. In contrast to this, in its ontological assumptions, sexual difference feminism does not deny but asserts the fundamental significance of sexual difference. This does not mean that most sexual difference feminisms are straightforwardly biologically essentialist; they are as often reliant upon social psychological, psychoanalytic or linguistic accounts of the meaning of sex and gender. However, it does mean that sexual difference feminisms are preoccupied with the positive potential of sex and gender as conditions of possibility for thought and the transformation of social and political relations for both men and women. This is in contrast to rationalist and critical feminisms, which see sex as ultimately philosophically and politically irrelevant and gender as something which ought to be transcended. Sexual difference feminism denies the argument of rationalist feminists that truth is essentially gender neutral and the argument of critical feminists that the goal of emancipation is essentially universal. Instead it is argued that mainstream philosophy, and even language as such, is essentially and irredeemably masculinist and relies on a gendered hierarchy of values in which the feminine is persistently denigrated and excluded. The appropriate response of feminist philosophers to this is not to include woman within existing philosophical narratives, but to discern and re-evaluate the criteria for truth and value based on the denigrated and excluded feminine position. Some forms of sexual difference feminism see the feminine mode of being and thought as complementary to or co-existing with mainstream masculinism. More radical sexual difference feminisms argue for a complete feminist transformation of social and political relations. Sexual difference feminism is much more ambivalent about, or in some cases hostile to, the categories of modern enlightenment philosophy and the ideological legacy of liberalism and socialism than rationalist and critical feminisms. For sexual difference feminism, patriarchy and modernity tend to be seen as necessarily rather than contingently related.⁸

Rationalist feminist philosophy accepts dominant post-enlightenment views of what philosophy should be; critical feminist philosophy carries

forward the understanding of philosophy first articulated by Marx as necessarily mediated by and reflecting experience and interests; sexual difference feminist philosophy builds on the significance of sexual difference for human thought. In contrast to all of these three, postmodernist feminist philosophy challenges claims to ground explanatory or normative judgement in reason, emancipation, female nature or the structure of the psyche. In doing so, it follows through modes of thinking characteristic of poststructuralist and postmodernist theorists such as Derrida and Foucault. Feminist postmodernism eschews stable ontological, epistemological and normative assumptions except of a negative kind. The key feature of feminist postmodernism is its emphasis on plurality and relativism. Thus, it rejects concepts of both universal humanity and the idea that the feminine subject position constitutes a unified category. Postmodernist feminists argue instead for the philosophical significance of difference between women as well as between men and women, and for the plurality of perspectives that are thereby generated for understanding and judgement. In this sense, postmodernist feminists are like the feminist readers invoked by Lloyd as 'shifting subjects, taking on multiple identities' (Lloyd, 2000: 261). Unlike the three previous types of feminist philosophy, postmodernist feminists do not see themselves as supplementing, complementing or providing an alternative set of responses to ongoing philosophical questions about being, truth and ethics. Instead their work tends to be oriented towards the subversion of philosophical claims to authority in relation to being, truth and ethics, including their own. Nevertheless, there is a politics implicit in postmodernist feminists' invocation of that which they are against. Like sexual difference feminists they are critical of the conceptual framework of modernity and see the ethical universalism of enlightenment thought as disguising particular power agendas.⁹

The modern, post-enlightenment philosophical tradition presents feminist philosophy with the conundrum of how women, sex and gender are to be defined in opposition to ways of thinking which have consistently identified women with the inferior term of hierarchical conceptual oppositions between reason and emotion, universal and particular, autonomy and heteronomy, culture and nature. Over the last thirty years, rationalist, critical, sexual difference and postmodernist feminist philosophies of different types have all offered various responses to the conundrum. However, they have not done this in a series of separate conversations with the philosophical tradition, but through an ongoing complex of conversations with each other which is also mediated by particular engagements with mainstream

philosophy. The development of feminist theory and ideology is often presented in introductory texts as following a particular logic, which begins with liberal feminism and is succeeded by a series of reactions to the inadequacies of the liberal viewpoint in radical, socialist and pluralist (lesbian, black, third-world) feminisms (Tong, 1992; Whelehan, 1995). In the case of philosophy, a similar logic can be discerned moving from rationalist to sexual difference to critical to postmodernist thinking. This is a caricature because all of these forms of thought actually exist in parallel and are mutually critical. Nevertheless, there is a grain of truth in this view to the extent that particular feminist approaches do define themselves as in some sense overcoming the inadequacies of existing alternatives. Moreover, what counts as inadequacy always relates back to the ways in which opposing views fail to emerge fully from the masculinist mode of thought which they claim to be transcending.

For instance, sexual difference feminisms argue that rationalist feminism remains caught in masculinism, because it neither overturns nor sublates the traditional binary hierarchies, but simply argues for the re-thinking of what was seen as 'male' in terms of an inclusive category of 'humanity'. In turn, rationalist feminism argues that certain forms of sexual difference feminism remain caught in patriarchal forms of thought because of their acceptance of the essential distinctiveness of women, whether grounded in nature, psyche or language. Thus the one-sidedness of the philosophical tradition is argued by both rationalists and sexual difference feminists to continue to haunt the other. Critical and postmodernist feminists criticize the one-sidedness of rationalist and sexual difference feminisms and look for a way beyond or between 'good father' and 'rebellious daughter' alternatives. Nevertheless, there continue to be echoes of debates between rationalists and sexual difference feminists in arguments between critical and postmodernist feminisms. Postmodernists accuse critical theorists of essentialism in suggesting an identity of women's interests or subject position; and of reverting to masculinist thinking in their endorsement of ethical universalism. Critical theorists accuse postmodernists of undermining the possibility of a ground for feminist critique by abandoning the side of reason. This, it is claimed, both disables coherent feminist politics as a project of women's emancipation and reinforces the ingrained essentialism of the philosophical tradition by identifying women with irrationality. The charge is always that the opponent has fallen into a dangerous one-sidedness in their thinking, having gone too far down a particularist (emotion, heteronormy, nature) route or too far down a universalist (reason, autonomy,

culture) one. It seems that the ghost of hierarchical binary oppositions has not been decisively laid even in those feminist philosophies which seek to sublate them most explicitly.¹⁰ In the following sections, we shall see how this pattern of haunting is repeated in certain areas of feminist philosophical work: feminist epistemology; feminist moral theory; and feminist political philosophy.

1.2 Feminist Re-thinkings of Reason and Truth

The ideal of true knowledge in the philosophical tradition is the perfect adequacy of the concept of an object to the object itself. The preoccupation of modern epistemology and philosophy of science since Kant has been with identifying the method by which concepts can best capture the reality of objects. The conceptual hierarchies we have already encountered have been vital to post-Kantian accounts of the conditions of possibility of knowledge. The predominant view has been one in which reason is grasped in contrast to emotion as an evaluatively neutral and authoritative route to knowledge of objects by the subject-knower. Reason as a capacity is seen as having nothing to do with concrete aspects of the knower's identity (state of mind) or of their identity with others (social existence). To the extent that feelings or social position affect rational processes they are seen as distorting them, which results in outcomes which are biased and subjective as opposed to neutral and objective. Truth, therefore, is grasped in contrast to opinion. Truth is understood as the perfect adequation of rational representation to objective reality, which is guaranteed by the use of appropriate ratiocination or method. Opinion, however, is a matter of perspective and guesswork; it is influenced by specific aspects of the knower's state of mind and context and is fundamentally relative. It is possible for opinions to coincide with truths, but only accidentally. Opinion only properly becomes knowledge when its claims are justified by reason and method.¹¹

Feminist epistemologists argue that the notions of reason and truth outlined above are masculinist because they undermine feminist claims to knowledge in a variety of ways. For rationalist feminist philosophy, the masculinism of this account lies in the ways in which women are in principle excluded as knowers, because of their association with the realms of emotion and heteronomy in the philosophical tradition. In the case of critical feminisms, it is argued that the feminist or women's viewpoint is delegitimated by mainstream accounts of epistemic authority because of the denial of the relevance of identity

and interest to the validity of claims to know. This means that mainstream epistemology cannot be oriented in terms of emancipatory feminist goals, but also that the dominant masculinist ideology is able to masquerade as objective and impartial. Sexual difference and postmodernist feminists share the critical feminist view that mainstream epistemology blocks the recognition of feminist knowledge claims and promotes a masculinist political agenda. In their case, however, there is no reference to normative goals which transcend particular interest; instead, they argue for either one or many alternative feminist standpoints for claims to knowledge. It is clear therefore that feminist epistemology has been the site of considerable internal debate over the appropriate scope and limits of feminist alternatives to mainstream theories of knowledge.

Sandra Harding has famously classified the different feminist epistemologies as feminist empiricist, feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernist positions (Harding, 1991).¹² According to Harding, feminist empiricism identifies the problem of mainstream approaches to understanding knowledge and knowledge acquisition with masculinist bias, and seeks more adequate, accurate and unbiased accounts. In general, feminist empiricism has been most closely associated with problems of knowledge in the context of the natural sciences (Tanesini, 1999: 95–113; Longino, 1993a; 1993b). In contrast, feminist standpoint theory is probably the most widely known and discussed feminist approach within the social sciences. Feminist standpoint theorists argue for the relevance of women's experience as the ground of authority of feminist claims (Hartsock, 1987; Smith, 1988). Feminist postmodernism, which distances itself from the idea of a stable feminist standpoint, argues for the situated and discursive nature of all knowledge claims and emphasizes the partiality and power-effects of those claims (Hekman, 1990; Flax, 1990).

Harding's classification is not meant to be taken rigidly; she herself suggests that there is an internal relation between the three schools she identifies, with feminist standpoint theory radicalizing the insights of feminist empiricism, and feminist postmodernism following through the implications of the insights of standpoint (Harding, 1991). There are certain key commonalities and certain key differences between the three perspectives. They have in common a shared acknowledgement of the importance of understanding reason, knowledge and truth as being inherently social, political and practical. They differ, however, in relation to questions about the conditions of possibility of knowledge claims and their accounts of the relation between the subject-knower and the object of knowledge. Let us examine the

commonalities first. To illustrate them I will draw on Helen Longino (1993a; 1993b) to exemplify feminist empiricism, on Nancy Hartsock (1987) to exemplify feminist standpoint theory and on Susan Hekman (1990; 1997) to exemplify feminist postmodernism.

Longino develops an argument that knowledge is essentially the product of publicly recognized and debatable standards of evidence, methods, assumptions and reasoning. These standards emerge and change through the dialogic interaction both between practising scientists and between them and the shifting social and political context in which science takes place. The validity of knowledge claims depends, for Longino, on the degree of 'cognitive democracy' within scientific communities (Longino, 1993a: 113). On her account, the notion of reason is thoroughly socialized and public. Rationality is not only something which shifts historically but, as an essentially public matter, it is open to challenge and revision. By insisting on a conception of reason which is intersubjective, Longino departs from both the notion of reason as a pure and privileged foundation of knowledge and from the notion of reason as an impartial methodological tool of analysis. She therefore also departs from classical rationalist and empiricist epistemologies in which reason provided a key to knowledge for the subject-knower, conceived in isolation. In addition, Longino argues that knowledge and truth should be understood not in terms of correspondence of subjective representation to the object of analysis, but rather in terms of 'practice' – a matter of interacting with and intervening in the world rather than reflecting it. As Longino puts it, there is no longer a 'terminus of inquiry that just is the set of truths about the world' (Longino, 1993a: 116).

Hartsock's standpoint version of feminist epistemology centres her theory of knowledge on the epistemological privilege and emancipatory potential seen to reside in grounding knowledge claims in the material standpoint of women. Within the context of contemporary capitalist societies, this standpoint is one of being caught in oppressive social and economic relations of reproduction and production (Hartsock, 1987). Hartsock draws upon a reading of Marx's understanding of the position of the proletariat under capitalism as enabling insights into the contradictions inherent in the system, which would be less immediately visible to those in positions of power (Hartsock, 1987: 158–9). According to feminist standpoint theory knowledge is necessarily linked to a point of view, a point of view which will either reflect positions of power or positions of subordination. The claim is not that the oppressed see everything more clearly, but that they have privileged insight into the conditions of their own

oppression and that in articulating them they will be better able to dismantle those very conditions. As with feminist empiricism, reason is historicized and politicized, understood not as neutral method, providing access to impartial truth, but as fundamentally 'interested', and not as private but as socially constructed and public. The notion of knowledge as practice is also present in standpoint theory. In standpoint theory there is a shift in the understanding of the relation of subject and object in knowledge to seeing knowledge as a form of self-understanding in the light of a project of self-transformation. This is not the self-transformation of an individual knower, but of the socially constructed identity-group of women. Like Longino, Hartsock identifies truth with fitness for purpose, but in feminist standpoint theory the ideal of emancipation, which is identified with the purpose of feminist knowledge claims, acquires an absolute end status which is lacking in feminist empiricism (Hartsock, 1987: 175–6).

As mentioned above, Harding sees feminist postmodernism as a radicalization of the feminist standpoint theorists' insight into the importance of the position or perspective of the knower for what can be known. Hekman makes a similar claim, arguing that feminist postmodernism is an extension of feminist standpoint (Hekman, 1997). According to Hekman, in the original formulation of standpoint theory, there was an in-built tension between its strong social-constructivist basis (in which knowledge is grounded in the positionality of the knower within social relations) and its equally strong claim to universal truth (defined in terms of an ideal of emancipation). This tension has then formed the basis of a shift to a new account of knowledge which continues to emphasize positionality and perspective but loses its attachment to universal truth. Part of the reason for this is argued to be the unsustainability of the notion of one feminist standpoint in the light of critiques from black and third-world feminists regarding the radical differences between different women's social positions (Nicholson, 1990; Hill Collins, 1990; Gunew, 1991). The other reason is seen as the increasing purchase of poststructuralist and postmodernist theories which undermine the notion of stable identities for knowers on which both feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint rely (Hekman, 1990; 1995).

The new paradigm of knowledge of which feminist standpoint theory is a part involves rejecting the definition of knowledge and truth as either universal or relative in favour of a conception of all knowledge as situated and discursive. (Hekman, 1997: 356–7)

For Hekman, the 'situated' nature of knowledge refers to something like the particular perspective of knowers in context. The 'discursive' nature of knowledge refers to its inherently linguistic form, something which, for Hekman, involves reference both to the inherent instability of meaning and the openness of all claims to deconstruction (drawing on Derrida) and to the practical effects of power which are undetachable from claims to knowledge (drawing on Foucault). In Hekman's case, then, the re-thinking of reason, knowledge and truth represents a radicalization of the understanding of epistemic positionality, beyond both the context of scientific and political community (feminist empiricism) and the privileged access of the knower to insight into the conditions of her own oppression (feminist standpoint). However, in line with Longino and Hartsock, what continues to be stressed are the social contexts and political agendas which form the conditions of possibility of knowledge claims, along with their practical effects.

Feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernism all work with an understanding of reason, knowledge and truth as being social, political and practical. This understanding is crucial to a shared critique of mainstream epistemology and the philosophy of science and social science. Re-thinking reason, knowledge and truth, in this way, opens up the possibility of incorporating feminist values in the assessment of claims to epistemic authority or objective truth. However, it is also clear that the positive implications of these approaches for notions of epistemic authority and objective truth are radically different since they differ in their views: first, as to the conditions of possibility for the generation of valid knowledge claims; and, second, as to the implications of those conditions for the status of and the relation between the subject making knowledge claims and the object about which those claims are being made. The result of this has been an ongoing debate within feminist epistemology about the conditions of possibility of knowledge claims, in which feminists seek to hold their ground between different versions of stable epistemic authority on the one hand ('cognitive democracy' versus the feminist standpoint) and postmodernist instability on the other; and a debate about the subject/object relation in which feminists negotiate between social/linguistic constructivism (idealism) and the assertion of a mind-independent reality (realism) – an argument on which there is some common ground between feminist empiricists and standpoint theorists as against postmodernists. The debate between the different versions of feminist epistemology is clearly preoccupied by, and also concerned to resist collapsing into, a simple reassertion or reversal of

hierarchical binary oppositions between universal and particular, reason and emotion, autonomy and heteronomy, ideal and real. In each case, proponents of any particular viewpoint would deny their assimilation to the kind of either/or choice which mainstream conceptions of the meaning and conditions of possibility of knowledge institutionalizes. At the same time, the familiar categories re-emerge in the ways in which opponents are characterized. In particular, the critical weight carried by the charge of epistemological relativism and consequent ethical particularism indicates the degree to which feminist argument continues to rely on the alternatives decreed by the mainstream conceptual framework. These alternatives do not provide a way of answering ontological and epistemological questions except in terms of either realism or idealism, universalism or particularist relativism.

1.3 Feminist Re-thinkings of Moral Agency and Judgement

Feminist moral theory, like feminist epistemology, has developed in reaction to a mainstream philosophical agenda. Until recently, this agenda was either concerned with highly metatheoretical questions concerning the validity of moral reasoning or, in relation to substantive moral frameworks, was dominated by a choice between the accounts of moral agency and judgement implicit in utilitarianism (or other forms of consequentialism) on the one hand and in deontological (most often Kantian) moral theory on the other. Feminist critiques of mainstream moral theory focused on a variety of ways in which it reflected masculinist bias in the accounts of both agency and judgement, and was therefore exclusive of women and the significance of gender as an aspect of moral subjectivity and judgement. As far as moral subjectivity was concerned, feminist commentators were uneasy with the highly individualized, disembodied and rationalistic characteristics displayed by the moral actor in both utilitarian and deontological theory. This model not only excluded the possibility that gender might be a relevant consideration in relation to moral agency, but also reflected the familiar binary conceptual hierarchy of the Western philosophical tradition in which conceptions of the subject as relational, embodied and feeling have been systematically devalued. The identification of these denigrated modes of subjectivity with women traditionally put women's status as moral agents into question. In relation to conceptions of moral judgement, the emphasis of mainstream moral theory was on the necessity to abstract from the specific and particular

in order for moral judgement to be possible. This occupation of the abstract and impartial position foundational to moral judgement is enabled by the invocation of a universal principle for judgement, which can make no sense without a stepping outside of particular interest and identity. Again, feminist critics argued both that this excluded consideration of gender as relevant to judgement and that it identified the ideal of moral reasoning with characteristics of separateness, disembodiedness and rationality, which have been traditionally associated with the masculine. Women's moral status is again put into question by their identification with the opposite of the characteristics valorized as necessary for morality.¹³

The critiques of mainstream moral theory began with the familiar 'good father' and 'rebellious daughter' alternative responses to mainstream philosophy. Rationalist feminist responses were largely concerned with the need to demonstrate that women should be considered as fully moral agents, with the capacity to act and judge as rational, separate individuals. In other cases critiques drawing on sexual difference feminism were developed, which argued for a new conception of moral agency and judgement to reflect the woman's, feminist or the feminine perspective. In turn, critical and postmodernist feminists sought to transcend the either/or choice between mainstream views of morality and the identification of morality with the previously subordinated term of the traditional binary oppositions. A key focus of debate within feminist ethics has been the idea of a feminist ethic of care, an argument which took particular inspiration from the work of the social psychologist Carol Gilligan (Gilligan, 1982).

In her book *In A Different Voice*, Gilligan not only reported on empirical evidence for the gendered nature of patterns of moral reasoning, but used this as a basis for challenging accepted assumptions about the meaning of moral maturity. Gilligan argued that the conception of moral maturity implicit in standard deontological, contractarian and utilitarian moral theory was in fact modelled on male patterns of development, which reflect an emphasis on separation, autonomy and abstraction (Kohlberg, 1981; Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1993: 64–90). Traditionally, following Kohlberg's model of the hierarchy of moral growth and learning, the highest level of moral maturity had been associated with the capacity to utilize impartial, rationally grounded universal principles in making ethical judgements. Gilligan challenged this, arguing that the contextual, relational and empathetic features of moral reasoning, more often displayed by adult women than the impartial, universalist approaches usually typical of adult men, were equally sophisticated and valuable. Since the impartial universalist

account of moral maturity dovetails with the dominant deontological and consequentialist paradigms in ethical theory, it is unsurprising that Gilligan's debate with Kohlberg has become characterized as the debate between an 'ethic of justice' (impartial universalism) and an 'ethic of care' (contextual particularism) in mature moral thinking (Cole and Coultrap-McQuin, 1992: 1–11). Gilligan's thesis draws attention to the centrality of the conception of moral subjectivity and agency to moral theory. She sets up the idea of an ethic of care in terms of a contrast between two sorts of moral subject: one of whom is positioned in abstraction from particularities of place and time, including his own concrete self-identity, rather like a Rawlsian individual behind the veil of ignorance; the other of whom is self-consciously a particular person judging in terms of the specific responsibilities and relations of care within which she is enmeshed. This distinction in terms of two types of moral subject opens the way to alternative accounts of the nature and validity of moral judgement. Gilligan does not argue for the superiority of one kind of judgement over the other; instead she argues that to reason contextually in terms of specific responsibilities and relations is both valid in itself and complementary to the procedure of invoking impartial principles for judgement (Gilligan, 1982: 174).

Gilligan states clearly that there is no necessary connection between the ethic of care or maternal thinking and being biologically female. However, critics of care ethics are concerned that it over-emphasizes a link between women and a particular, fixed form of subjectivity or moral identity. This concern is shared by rationalist, critical and post-modernist feminists (see Scaltsas, 1992; Porter, 1991; and Hekman, 1995 respectively). In all three cases, the worry is the linking of women to a set of characteristics that confirms rather than challenges the philosophical tradition's placing of women within its binary conceptual hierarchy. The ontological question about the nature of women is important not only in itself but because of its implications for the possibility of authoritative normative judgement within feminism. Here rationalist and critical feminists (as with feminist empiricists and standpoint theorists in the context of epistemology) can be distinguished from postmodernists. For the former, authoritative judgement depends on the invocation of commonalities which are in principle non-exclusive and therefore generate universalizable judgements. For the latter, it is precisely the rejection of stable foundations for, and assumptions about the generalizability of, moral claims which underpins the meaningfulness and possible effects of any judgement. Rationalist and critical feminists accuse both sexual difference and

postmodernist feminists of a dangerous ethical relativism, which undermines the possibility of feminist emancipatory politics (Porter, 1991; Scaltsas, 1992; Benhabib, 1992). In different ways, sexual difference and postmodernist feminisms accuse rationalist and critical feminists of subsuming women's difference within masculinist norms and values. For sexual difference feminists, however, that which is shared by women provides an alternative site for moral thinking and action (Noddings, 1984; Ruddick, 1990). Whereas for postmodernist feminists, the suggestion that there is a common ground from which women judge and act is as problematic as reliance on universalization tests in ethics (Diprose, 1994; Hekman, 1995). The logic of debate within feminist moral theory exemplifies again both the goal of transcending the options ingrained in mainstream moral theory and the resilience of the hierarchy of values embodied within that mainstream. Once more, feminist philosophy presents us with the difficulty of thinking a way between fixed essences on the one hand and arbitrariness on the other, in its quest to grasp the ontology of sexual difference and its implications for authoritative normative judgement and prescription.

1.4 Feminist Re-thinkings of Politics

All branches of feminist philosophy are the offspring of feminist ideology and identify themselves as part of an ongoing political struggle. Feminist political philosophy is directly concerned with questions of ideology and practical political engagement and, in particular, with the question of how women's oppression is to be understood and addressed. The key reference point in the development of feminist political theory has been the assumptions entrenched in the liberal political order and in liberal political philosophy, which continues to dominate mainstream political thought in the academy. Feminist philosophy's response to liberalism follows a familiar pattern in which rationalist 'good father' interpretations are criticized from sexual difference, critical and postmodernist perspectives respectively. Rationalist feminism shares the basic assumptions of liberalism which were developed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century enlightenment thought. In particular, rationalist feminism accepts the liberal conception of the individual as entitled to rights. The oppression of women is seen to reside in the extent to which they have not been treated as individuals and have been denied access to rights on the same terms as men. For rationalist feminism, therefore, the way to address this

oppression is to guarantee equality of right to all, regardless of sex (Whelehan, 1995: 25–43).

Feminist critics of rationalist feminism argue that it overlooks the masculinism of the presuppositions of liberal thought upon which it relies. The liberal ideal of the rights-bearing citizen is premised on privileging his rationality and autonomy as the ground of his entitlement to rights. This is argued to exclude women doubly, both because of their traditional identification with the denigrated pair in the reason/emotion, autonomy/heteronomy binary oppositions, and because it disguises the actual dependence of the citizen in the public sphere on the work of reproduction and care carried out in the private sphere. The re-thinking of political agency in terms which do not privilege rationality and autonomy in the liberal sense is crucial to feminist attempts to articulate a different kind of politics. Different types of feminist philosophy approach this re-thinking in different ways. Sexual difference feminists focus attention on the reproductive and caring roles carried out within the private sphere and the value they may have for formulating a different ideal for 'doing politics'. Critical feminists focus attention on the structural dependence of liberal states and capitalism on a sexual division of labour and locate political agency not in abstract, individuated rationality and autonomy, but in women's common interest in emancipation. Postmodernist feminists focus attention on the diversity of women's identities and interests within the liberal polity and, in contrast to rationalist, sexual difference and critical feminisms, argue for a radical pluralism in feminist politics. In all three cases, these are arguments about how feminists should do politics within liberal polities (Squires, 1999).

The liberal ideal of citizenship is one which is grounded in the idea of natural individual rights. These natural rights are both discernible by and justified by the natural reason inherent in each individual. They underpin the legal, political and social positive rights to which citizens of liberal states are entitled. Liberal citizenship is principally a matter of the protection of entitlements to rights; it does not demand the commitment to participation in and identity with the polity which is engrained in the republican tradition. Instead, liberal citizenship is focused on protecting the citizen from the state and enabling as wide a sphere of uncoerced activity within the private sphere and civil society for citizens as possible. Liberal citizenship was originally understood as exclusive to male property-owners; over time it has been extended to all adults within liberal states. As we have seen, feminist critiques of liberal citizenship began as arguments to extend

liberal citizenship rights fully to women within the liberal state. However, what they found was that even when rights were so extended women remained excluded and disadvantaged within the liberal state. One response to this was for feminist political theorists to argue for alternative models of citizenship which would be more enabling for feminist politics. Three such alternatives can be found in the ideas of maternal thinking, deliberative democracy and identity politics.

In her book *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, Ruddick draws on Gilligan's idea of an ethic of care as a central part of her argument for feminist moral theory and political practice. Ruddick argues that the practice of rearing children embodies certain virtues and attitudes which provide a resource for feminist politics (Ruddick, 1990: 13–27). This implies a rejection of two aspects of liberal citizenship as it has been traditionally understood: abstraction and impartial universalism. Like the subject-knower and moral judge of mainstream epistemology and moral theory, the good liberal citizen is a citizen in virtue of a capacity to reason which is irrelevant to their private identity. In addition, the good liberal citizen judges and acts with reference to principles engrained in natural reason, rather than private interest embedded in particular relationships. Ruddick argues in contrast that the capacity for citizenship depends on private identity and, more strongly, that the capacity for good citizenship is bound up with a particular kind of private experience which has been common to women. In addition, she argues that the judgement and action of citizens should be contextual and reflect the actual patterns of responsibility within concrete, empathetic relationships. Two examples Ruddick gives of ways of doing politics along maternalist lines are women's anti-nuclear protests and the mothers of 'the disappeared' in Argentina (Ruddick, 1990: 222–51). In both cases, Ruddick argues that we see the values inherent in maternal thinking used to subvert the oppressive politics of states. Ruddick's focus is on peace politics, but her argument typifies a strand of feminist political theory which requires the re-thinking of citizenship in terms which bring the virtues and values traditionally associated with women's work in the private sphere into the public domain.

Benhabib criticizes the turn to care in moral and political theory for its relativism and parochialism (Benhabib, 1992: 187–90). Her argument rehearses a familiar point made by critical theory in response to sexual difference feminisms, which is that without an orientation to a universal normative standard of emancipation the critical, transformative capacity of feminist politics is lost. Benhabib is sympathetic to the attention to identity and context within the ethics and politics

of care, but argues that when this becomes the sole ground of judgement and action feminist politics becomes the exclusive expression of partial interest. Part of Benhabib's argument is that thinkers such as Ruddick tend to essentialize an account of women's identity and experience without paying sufficient attention to differences between them. A more significant aspect, however, is the claim that a politics of care over-corrects the bias of the philosophical tradition towards abstraction and impartiality. Benhabib argues instead for the incorporation of both the 'concrete' and the 'generalized' other in a critical political theory, and for a deliberative democratic politics which permits both contextual sensitivity and orientation towards universally valid normative goals (Benhabib, 1992: 164–70). In order to do this, she draws on Habermas's account of communicative reason. According to Habermasian theory, there is an interest in emancipation which is common to all individuals because it is implicit in the conditions of rational argumentation itself (Benhabib, 1996b: 67–74). Benhabib's deliberative ideal of citizenship combines aspects of liberal and republican traditions. It is based on the conditions specified by Habermas for the force of argument alone to determine the outcomes of political argument and is therefore grounded in certain basic rights. At the same time, however, it requires equal participation of citizens in democratic decision-making in a way which recognizes and articulates particular identities and interests.

The argument between maternalist and deliberative ideals of feminist citizenship is one aspect of a broader feminist debate about political participation and representation. Both Ruddick and Benhabib are concerned to affirm the relevance of identity to political judgement and action. However, critics such as Young argue that there is a problem with the way in which identity and politics are brought together in both of these two models. Young criticizes the maternalist model because it is based on generalizations about women's identity and neglects significant power differences between women in terms of class, race and sexuality. The danger of maternalism is that it reproduces an exclusivist politics which reflects the experience and interests of only some (white middle-class) women (Young, 1990: 161–3). The danger of deliberation based on a Habermasian view of communicative reason is that it privileges certain forms of communication and is exclusive in practice of modes of discourse which don't fit mainstream ideals of rationality as abstract and impartial (Young, 1996; 2000: 52–80). Young argues that if feminist politics is to be genuinely inclusive then it has to be more radically pluralist and to embrace a conception of citizenship in which representation of

subordinated groups is institutionalized (Young, 1990: 156–91). Young's revision of the Habermasian ideal of democratic citizenship remains close to Benhabib's critical theory, in that notions of communication and of the orientation of politics towards emancipation remain crucial. More radical postmodernist questioning of maternalist and Habermasian feminist political ideals can be found in theorists such as Mouffe. Mouffe argues that the link between identity and politics takes on far too fixed, and thereby exclusive, a form in sexual difference feminism (Mouffe, 1993: 78–82). For Mouffe, however, Young's analysis makes the same kind of mistake by being tied to an essentialist conception of group identity (Mouffe, 1993: 86). However, according to Mouffe, critical theory feminisms make another kind of mistake, because they rely on the notion of the orientation of communication towards a universal, emancipatory ideal (Mouffe, 1993: 8). Mouffe argues instead that the feminist model for citizenship should be premised on the critique of 'essentialism in all its different forms' (Mouffe, 1993: 88). This means that 'identity politics' becomes conceived in terms of shifting, contingent and strategic *identifications* of citizens with particular political goals (Mouffe, 1993: 82–5).

Mouffe's argument completes a pattern to feminist debate over citizenship in which successive theorists criticize their predecessors for failing to be sufficiently inclusive in their feminist politics. The claim of false inclusivity which was made against liberal citizenship, in which its universality in theory failed to amount to universality in practice is made in turn against maternalist (Benhabib *contra* Gilligan and Ruddick) and deliberative (Young and Mouffe *contra* Benhabib) models. However, the universal/particular conceptual binary is turned back on postmodernist critics such as Mouffe, because they are accused of an extreme of particularism which undermines the meaningfulness of the category of feminist politics as such (Benhabib, 1992: 203–41). The pattern which is already familiar from examining debates in feminist epistemology and moral theory is repeated.

Conclusion

The above sketches of feminist philosophical debate demonstrate that there is a recurring pattern discernible within and between diverse strands of feminist philosophy. I have suggested that this pattern is determined by feminist philosophy's relationship to the hierarchy of conceptual oppositions which frames much of mainstream

philosophical thought. Feminist philosophers identify the traditional conceptual hierarchy as excluding and denigrating them both as women and as feminists. Within this hierarchy to be female is to be less than human. To be a feminist and thereby to introduce ideological values and goals into philosophical reason is to misunderstand what philosophical reason is and to exclude yourself by definition as a valid participant in philosophical debate. Unsurprisingly, therefore, lapsing back into traditional binary oppositions is identified as the greatest danger for feminist thinkers and the most significant way in which an opposing feminist position can be criticized. Yet it proves remarkably hard to formulate ways of thinking which cannot be accused of re-inventing hierarchical binaries and the exclusiveness and one-sidedness of judgement which they entail. This is evident in the ways in which references to binaries are invoked to condemn alternative arguments. It is also evident in the way in which the strategic goal of much feminist philosophical thinking is to find an alternative to the choice between 'good father' and 'rebellious daughter' alternatives.

In the discussion of feminist philosophies in section 1.1, it was noted that critical, sexual difference and postmodernist feminisms draw on theoretical perspectives which are also subversive of the mainstream philosophical tradition. Marxist, psychoanalytic, poststructuralist and postmodernist thought all define themselves, at least to some extent, in terms of an opposition to conceptual binaries between culture and nature, reason and emotion, fact and value, ideal and real. A key philosophical reference point for all of these modes of thinking is Hegel's work. Hegel was the first philosopher to identify his philosophical project with moving through and beyond the 'way of despair', in which the inadequacy of thinking in terms of binary oppositions is demonstrated and overcome. In the following chapter, I will offer an exposition of what this means in Hegel's thought before returning to raise the question of the parallels between the pathways of Hegelian and feminist thought, and the potential of a conversation, or even convergence, between them.

2

Philosophy as the Task of Comprehension

Introduction

Providing an account of Hegel's philosophy is a difficult task. The first difficulty is that Hegel's philosophical oeuvre extends across a tremendous amount of philosophical ground. It is therefore hard to summarize without massive oversimplification. The second difficulty is that Hegel's work continues to be the subject of contestation between radically different interpretations. Within this chapter, I attempt to address these problems by restricting my account of Hegel's work to those texts and ideas which are most central to my own interpretation of Hegel and to those aspects of his work which have figured most prominently in subsequent feminist 'conversations' with him. One of the most common criticisms of Hegel is the difficulty of his philosophical vocabulary. In my exposition of Hegel's arguments I will highlight those concepts which are of particular importance in the context of this book. These include: phenomenology; spirit; ethical life; reason; the concept; absolute knowing; and the end of history.¹ In the final section I will map out the various trajectories of feminist readings of Hegel's work. In doing this the way of despair travelled by feminist philosophy is brought together with that trodden and retrodden in Hegelian thought in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and subsequent works. In conclusion, I will suggest that this common ground between feminist philosophy and Hegelian thought provides a reason for feminism to take Hegelianism seriously as a possible resource for thought. The Hegelian texts upon which I will be focusing are: *Phenomenology of Spirit* (originally published 1807, hereafter *Phenomenology*); *Science of Logic* (originally published in

three parts 1812–16, hereafter *Logic*); *Philosophy of Nature* (Part Two of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*; various versions published, 1817–30); and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (first published 1821).

2.1 Phenomenology and Science

Few philosophers have left a legacy of textual interpretation as hotly philosophically and politically contested as that of Hegel. Fewer still have been such a focus of ideological debate not only over their substantive political claims, but over the political implications of the claims made for their own philosophical work in general. This was evident in the first generation of reception of Hegel's ideas in the 1840s, which is generally seen as falling into two camps: the 'right' and 'left' Hegelians. Right Hegelians read Hegel as a Protestant and conservative thinker. His notions of 'absolute knowledge' and the 'end of history' were understood in terms of the claim that Protestant Christianity and the Prussian state constituted the supreme religious and political achievements of human history. In contrast, the left Hegelians, including thinkers such as Feuerbach and Marx, read Hegel's philosophy as a dynamic, revolutionary mode of thinking which could be a resource for critique of the established religious and political order (Toews, 1981; Stepelevitch, 1983). The right- and left-Hegelian responses to Hegel's work interpret it differently ideologically, but they also exemplify alternative traditions of Hegel interpretation in a more general sense. The former tradition reads Hegel's thought as an internally consistent closed system; the latter emphasizes the internal contradictions and tensions within Hegel's work and regards it as embodying the principles of its own transcendence.²

The proliferation of interpretations of Hegel's meaning can be explained, in part at least, by the obscurity and difficulty of his arguments. Readers can easily find textual support for contradictory positions within his texts, both within the same text and between texts. Hegel can be (and has been) plausibly made to figure as realist or idealist, as liberal or conservative, as correspondence or consensus theorist of truth.³ For some commentators the response to this is to postulate radical breaks between Hegel's earlier work, in particular between the *Phenomenology* and his later systematic, speculative philosophy. However, there is little justification for drawing these distinctions in Hegel's own account of the relation between different aspects of his work. For example, Hegel continues to rely on arguments

made in the *Phenomenology* not only in the *Logic*, which was written fairly shortly afterwards, but in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and the *Encyclopaedia* texts which were written much later. For other commentators, the response to apparent inconsistencies in Hegel's argument is to read him selectively and thus to follow Marx in separating the rational kernel from the metaphysical shell of his thought (Marx, 1976: 103). But this again accords ill with the interdependence of different aspects of Hegel's thought, which is made explicit in the conceptual continuities within and across Hegel's writings, as well as in his insistence on the systematic nature of his philosophical project. In contrast to either of these responses, I will put forward an alternative suggestion. This suggestion claims that it is possible to interpret Hegel's work in a way which encompasses both its systematic completeness and its open, self-transcending potential. In order to explain this suggestion, we need to look at the context in which Hegel formulated his mature thought and the way that thought is developed in the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*.⁴

Hegel (1770–1831) was one of a generation of German philosophers responding to two major events, one philosophical and one political. The philosophical event was the publication of Kant's mature critical philosophy; the political event was the French Revolution of 1789.⁵ Hegel saw both events as signifying a historical shift into a new mode of human self-understanding in which the notion of self-determination emerged as the model for philosophical reason and political practice. In common with many of his contemporaries, Hegel was ambivalent in his response to these developments. On the one hand he saw the principle of self-determination as the major positive achievement of modernity, both philosophically and politically. On the other hand, he saw the articulation of these principles in Kant's philosophy and revolutionary politics as depending on conceptual binary oppositions which entailed a one-sided, inadequate and dangerous understanding of the possibilities for both thought and action.

Hegel was particularly critical of Kantian epistemology and moral philosophy. He argued that the distinctions developed in Kant's critical thought between things as they appear (phenomena) and things as they are in themselves (noumena) and between reason (a realm of self-determination or autonomy) and nature (a realm of external causality or heteronomy) posed problems for Kant's own philosophical project (Kant, 1983: 257–75; Kant, 1991: 40–54). For Hegel, the effect of these diremptions, rather than establishing the limits of philosophical reason as a necessary preliminary to metaphysics, as Kant had claimed, in fact undermined the possibility of metaphysics as the project of

comprehending truth and goodness. Instead, philosophy was caught in a perpetual striving for access to noumenal and transcendental realms from which human understanding was forever excluded. Drawing on his critique of Kant's moral theory, Hegel argued that a conception of freedom which defined it in terms of an absolute distinction between autonomous and heteronomous determination underpinned the French revolutionary terror. The politics of terror was a politics of pure freedom in which any stability of structure, institutions and roles could only be seen in terms of limitation and coercion. This kind of politics, Hegel argued, could only manifest itself in perpetual destruction, since any constructive work would inevitably contradict the absoluteness of freedom. In the case of both Kant and the terror, Hegel suggests that if it is impossible to think appearance and reality, freedom and determination, except in mutually exclusive terms, then thought has either to identify with one or other 'side' of the dichotomy or to become paralysed and cease altogether.⁶

Hegel identified his task as being that of systematically comprehending the principles articulated within the philosophy and politics of his time in a way which did not lapse into the distorted one-sidedness he identified in Kant's work and revolutionary terror. The term 'comprehension' is particularly important for Hegel's view of his own philosophical work. *Comprehension* stands in contrast to the notion of *judgement*. Whereas comprehension implies an act of conceptualization which holds things together, judgement implies the division of a whole into its parts, an act of separation.⁷ The first stage in Hegel's development of comprehensive philosophy is expounded in the *Phenomenology*, which he identified as the 'ladder' to his systematic philosophy, in particular the *Logic*. In the Preface, the *Phenomenology* is introduced as concerned with the conditions of possibility of science understood as the actual cognition of what truly is (Hegel, 1977: 2–4; 46). Given its avowed purpose, however, the structure and content of the *Phenomenology* is something of a surprise.

In the main body of the *Phenomenology*, after an initial section in which Hegel engages with a variety of alternative epistemological positions, the argument takes an unexpected turn from the abstract realm of theories of knowledge to the concrete realm of human existence and the conditions of possibility for the formation of self-conscious being. It then turns back again to arguments within contemporary philosophy as to how human judgement is to be understood in the contexts of both science and ethics, before moving on to an account of European history and the key modes of thought associated with particular eras from Ancient Greece to modern Germany. The

narrative then moves on to a discussion of religion and art which retraces the historical route taken in the previous section, and then to a very brief closing chapter entitled 'Absolute Knowing'. For any reader, it is a huge challenge to make sense of Hegel's overall argument in the *Phenomenology* and the curious way it jumps around both philosophically and historically.⁸ From the point of view of my interpretation of Hegel, the most important aspect of the *Phenomenology* is its phenomenological approach and its use of the concepts of spirit (*Geist*), ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) and absolute knowledge (*das absolute Wissen*).⁹

In the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel sets out his distinct approach to addressing the central question in modern, post-Cartesian philosophy about the meaning and conditions of possibility of true knowledge. He complains that standard philosophical attempts to account for how knowledge is possible and what can be known become snarled up in the problem of cognition understood as the instrument or medium through which we gain access to truth. Hegel argues that any philosophical approach which views knowledge as the bringing together of a knowing subject (concept) and an independently existing truth (object) has the problem of explaining how the identity of these non-identical terms has been established. A variety of strategies have been deployed by modern philosophy, in which cognition either passively or actively mediates between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge, but in all cases, Hegel argues, the non-identity of subject-knower and object-known results in knowledge becoming knowledge of appearance only. However, according to the understanding of truth as independent of cognition, knowledge of appearance cannot be true knowledge and therefore philosophy is presented again with the challenge of bridging the gap between subject-knower and independent truth (Hegel, 1977: 46–9). If there is to be a chance of getting beyond this permanent failure of philosophy, Hegel claims that it can only be through the immanent experience of that failure and the lessons offered by it. In other words, science must start by exploring rather than dismissing phenomenal knowledge (Hegel, 1977: 49). For Hegel, this is the meaning of phenomenology as opposed to philosophical science. Phenomenology is the immanent exploration of how things are experienced, whereas science offers systematic, categorical comprehension of the outcomes of phenomenological investigation. Phenomenology is therefore the Hegelian equivalent of Kantian critique; like Kantian critique it paves the way to science. According to Hegel, however, it does so without predetermining its own failure by presuming the inadequacy of phenomenal knowledge

in advance. In spite of Hegel's distinction between them, therefore, we do not know at this stage whether and how philosophical science will be distinguishable from phenomenology.

Natural consciousness will show itself to be only the Notion of knowledge, or in other words, not to be real knowledge. But since it directly takes itself to be real knowledge, this path has negative significance for it, and what is in fact the realization of the Notion, counts for it rather as the loss of its own self; for it does lose its truth on this path. The road can therefore be regarded as the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely as the way of despair. (Hegel, 1977: 49)

The argument of the *Phenomenology* takes the form of a narrative in which the knowing subject, the object of knowledge and observing reason (Hegel and the reader) are the three protagonists. Of these only Hegel and the reader maintain the stable position of onlooker. Both the knowing subject and the object of knowledge shift as the successive failures of attempts by the knowing subject to grasp or account for its object push forward a learning process (*Bildung*) which culminates in 'absolute knowledge' (Hegel, 1977: 50). Thus the subject-knower initially appears as mere consciousness, then as life, self-consciousness, reason and spirit. The object also shifts from inanimate externality to consciousness, life, self-consciousness, reason and spirit. The transformative dynamic of this learning process is presented by Hegel as an immanent dialectic in which a mode of understanding proves to be unsustainable in its own terms and has therefore to be re-conceptualized. The most common lesson to be learned is that thinking in terms of an understanding of subject and object, as a mutually exclusive binary opposition, necessarily results in one-sidedness and a consequent failure to comprehend not only the excluded or denigrated term, but the ground of the authority of the privileged one. Hegel demonstrates repeatedly that attempts to transcend the experienced failures of the ways in which consciousness understands its relation to the objective world in fact return consciousness to a different version of what appears to be essentially the same dilemma. Nevertheless, to the extent that Hegel sees the progress of phenomenal knowledge involving the education of consciousness there must be more to the story than simple repetition. One section of the text can be used to exemplify the general pattern of Hegel's account and the ways in which he sees consciousness as both returning to the same failure and also learning; this is the section entitled 'Stoicism, Scepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness' (Hegel, 1977: 119–38).

In this section of the text, Hegel has just introduced self-consciousness as a necessary element in consciousness's cognition of truth. The narrative follows through three modes of grasping the nature of and the relation between self-consciousness and world, which are historically situated in the transition from the pagan (stoicism and scepticism) philosophies of Ancient Rome to Christian beliefs. The three versions of self-consciousness in relation to world are contrasted as follows. Stoicism identifies self-consciousness with the activity of thinking and locates all truth and goodness in the individual's capacity for thought. The external, practical world is conceived and experienced as something to which self-consciousness is indifferent and wholly other (Hegel, 1977: 119–22). Scepticism identifies self-consciousness with truth in a similar way to stoicism, but rather than being indifferent to the world relates itself to externality as the active negation of its (externality's) independence. Scepticism denies that there is anything essentially real and locates truth solely in self-consciousness's capacity to demonstrate the lack of certainty which we have about anything other than our capacity to doubt (Hegel, 1977: 123–6). The unhappy (Christian) consciousness is a divided self-consciousness in which self-consciousness shifts between different ways of both distinguishing itself from and identifying itself with truth. On the one hand, it identifies itself with the unchangeable truth, which is the work of the divine and in which the divine is incarnated. On the other hand it associates itself with that which is inessential, changeable and untrue (Hegel, 1977: 126–38).

In his discussion of the three forms of self-consciousness, Hegel criticizes each for their one-sidedness and argues that each is inherently inadequate and self-subverting as a way of understanding self-consciousness and truth. Stoicism is argued to lapse into claims which are empty of meaning. In its refusal to engage with the external world, stoicism becomes the 'tedious' repetition of the contentless assertion of the location of the true and the good in thought without being able to explain or demonstrate its (thought's) own value beyond mere assertion (Hegel, 1977: 122). In the case of scepticism, its negative relation to its object necessarily carries over into its account of the authority of consciousness, which is as open to doubt as any other object of thought. The independent freedom and self-certainty of thought, as an object of thought within scepticism, becomes a contingent flux of mutually incompatible claims. The denial of the truth of the capacity for thought leads scepticism into the self-contradictory position of having to rely on that which it at the same time denies:

It affirms the nullity of seeing, hearing, etc., yet it is itself seeing, hearing, etc. It affirms the nullity of ethical principles, and lets its conduct be governed by these very principles. Its deeds and its words always belie one another and equally it has the doubly contradictory consciousness of unchangeableness and sameness, and of utter contingency and non-identity with itself. (Hegel, 1977: 125)

The unhappy consciousness is caught in its incapacity to grasp an identification between individual, actually existing self-consciousness and truth. Each of its attempts to think this relation, in terms of faith, work or penitence, remains caught in the double-thinking of self-consciousness as both human and divine, finite and infinite (Hegel, 1977: 128–9). Nevertheless, although unhappy consciousness in one sense repeats the dilemmas inherent in stoicism's and scepticism's privileging of one side of the binary opposition between self-consciousness and its object, Hegel also presents the transition from the pagan to the Christian mode of thought as a learning process. The unhappy consciousness has moved further than either stoicism or scepticism in grasping the inadequacy of ways of thinking which insist on an intractable alienation between thought and world, and the way this either reduces world to thought or thought to world. Hegel's argument suggests that in Christianity one at least has the intimation of truth as something that is actively lived and should not be conceived as inherently alien to individual self-consciousness. The problem with unhappy consciousness is that this remains an intimation of what *should* be, rather than what is. The conceptual framework of the unhappy consciousness is one which does not permit a way of thinking the identity of self-consciousness and truth, but only of perpetual movement between the reductions which stoicism and scepticism have already explored.

The historical location of the stoic, sceptical and Christian alternatives in Hegel's account, which take us from Ancient Roman philosophy to Western medieval thought, is significant for the bigger story of the experience of phenomenal knowledge which is being told. Having discussed unhappy consciousness, Hegel moves on to the ground of modern philosophical idealism and the identification of truth with *reason* (Hegel, 1977: 139–262). This is significant because it is one of several points in the *Phenomenology* in which Hegel explicitly claims that in his own time there has been a progress beyond the necessary but inadequate stages of consciousness which are reflected in Roman and medieval Christian philosophy and theology. There are two key points to draw attention to here: first, Hegel's presentation of the

development of the understanding of truth as tied to a particular history, which is the history of Western modernity; second, Hegel's claim that modern understandings of truth are superior to their predecessors within that particular history. The former claim is explored further in the chapter on 'Spirit' which follows the one on 'Reason' (see discussions of spirit and ethical life below). The latter claim is the focus of the 'Reason' chapter. Within this chapter, Hegel explores a wide variety of contemporary philosophical and scientific arguments about truth and goodness. These arguments are held to be an advance on previous modes of understanding in that they take as their starting point the denial of any inherent alienation between self-consciousness and truth. Nevertheless, Hegel continues to point to the liability of these modern modes of understanding to lapse into new dualisms in epistemology and ethics, which echo the dilemmas of unhappy consciousness and remain trapped in one-sidedness.¹⁰ Hegel suggests, therefore, that there continue to be dangers and temptations for specifically modern thinking which lead to the re-inscription of older conceptual binary oppositions.

The lesson of the perils of one-sided thinking are apparent not only in Hegel's specific demonstrations of its unsustainability in epistemology and ethics, but in the shifting shapes of the subject-knower (consciousness) referred to above. In particular, Hegel undermines the idea of the subject-knower as an abstract, individuated entity distinct from the object it is trying to grasp. Here Hegel is very clearly following in the footsteps of Kant's critical idealism. In contrast to Kant, however, for Hegel unpacking the role of self-consciousness in conscious knowing involves unpacking the relation of 'I' to its natural condition, to other 'I's, to its social and historical context and to its historically shifting forms of self-understanding in common sense, religion, art and philosophy. Two concepts which are very important for Hegel's thought emerge from this phenomenology of self-conscious being: spirit (*Geist*) and ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*).

The concept *Geist* is sometimes translated as 'mind'; however, the term 'spirit' captures rather better the range of meaning that the concept carries for Hegel. Hegel distinguishes between objective and subjective spirit. In both cases the reference is to a world of intersubjectivity which is self-determining and self-changing, famously introduced in the *Phenomenology* as "I" that is "We" and "We" that is "I" (Hegel, 1977: 110). Included within subjective spirit is individual self-conscious existence and experience; included within objective spirit is all that self-conscious existence has produced in terms of culture, laws, institutions, habits and the 'second nature' of

an environment produced through human labour. In Hegel's view, art, religion and philosophy are also aspects of spirit in that they represent modes of self-reflection of spirit, but not ones which occupy some position outside of spirit. Objective and subjective spirit may be analytically distinguishable, but they are not separable, rather, they mutually constitute each other in an ongoing dialectical process. Hegel's concept of spirit is crucial to the way in which he both accepts the importance of the idea of self-determination as the truth which is captured in modern spirit and the forms of its self-understanding *and* sees it as misunderstood within Kantian philosophy and the French Revolution. The problem with both Kant's philosophy and the ideology inspiring the revolution is that a partial understanding of the autonomous self as abstracted, individuated and ahistorical is identified as universal. For Hegel, self-determination is the truth of a complex, mediated and self-reflective whole rather than of an individuated rational agency.

Sittlichkeit has a meaning very close to that of spirit; ethical life is introduced into the story of the development of spirit in the *Phenomenology* in the section entitled 'Spirit' and it is clear that these are closely related terms. In general, *Sittlichkeit* is used to refer to a narrower range of phenomena than spirit. It covers the ways in which objective and subjective spirit are normatively structured and is used consistently in contrast to *Moralität*, by which Hegel means accounts of morality, most obviously Kant's account, which present themselves as abstracted from objective spirit and therefore in a position to pronounce judgement on it. *Sittlichkeit* includes both morality and politics, realms which had been decisively distinguished in Kant's ethical thought. Both spirit and ethical life, therefore, represent counters to Kant's thought and the range of dichotomies inherent within it. For Hegel, not only is it wrong to posit a fixed diremption between autonomous and heteronomous realms, morality and politics, but also to assume a separation between the realms of philosophy and of politics. The story of the *Phenomenology* above all depends on an undermining of claims to truth grounded in ahistorical rationally accessible criteria. The condition of possibility of philosophy is bound up with ethical life. For Hegel, therefore, it is no accident that Kant's critical philosophy and the French Revolution are contemporary and linked events, not because one caused the other, but because both manifest the modern self-understanding of spirit.

In the final chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel tries to summarize the way he and the reader have come in following the path of the experience of consciousness, and to look forward to the philosophical

science which is now possible. This chapter is entitled 'Absolute Knowing'. In debates over the fundamental nature of Hegelian thought it is the conception of 'absolute knowledge' which is most often seen as confirming the irrelevance and absurdity of Hegel's philosophy. The idea seems to commit Hegel either to contradicting his own historicism by positing a transhistorical insight into truth, or to announcing an 'end of history' in a way which appears two centuries later as both arrogant and false. There is, however, an alternative way of reading Hegel's notion of 'absolute knowledge', one which is compatible with Hegel's historicism, and gives a rather different meaning to the 'end of history'.

The progress towards absolute knowledge in the *Phenomenology* does not necessarily signify a journey towards transcendent truth. As was stated above, the central lesson learned by the reader in the journey of consciousness and its object is that spirit is the ever-changing condition of all knowledge and all truth. More than that, however, spirit as the realm of self-changing intersubjectivity is fundamentally self-determining. These two lessons taken together constitute what Hegel terms 'absolute knowledge'. The knowledge of spirit as self-determination is absolute in that it is a universal, categorical claim about ethical life, all individual and collective action in the world and all practical and theoretical claims. It is, however also a claim which is contingently grounded. This knowledge, Hegel argues, is one that has been articulated in the modern world in a way in which it couldn't be in, for instance, ancient and medieval worlds where the conditions of possibility of its recognition were not present. These conditions of possibility are what is traced in the progress of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. They arise on the basis of the legacies of Roman legality and Christianity in Western Europe and include concrete social and political institutions and ideologies, as well as more abstract forms of self-reflection which have developed in art, religion and philosophy. Hegel frequently reiterates the claim that the time at which he is writing exemplifies a new departure in both history and philosophy (Hegel, 1977: 6-7). This is not the claim that spirit has suddenly become self-determining when it hasn't been before. Instead, Hegel's claim is that the idea of spirit's self-determination is an insight enabled by a specific history. Furthermore, it is this insight that particular 'Is' and 'Wes' explicitly articulate and institutionalize in German philosophy and in French revolutionary politics respectively. Absolute knowledge is not what is contained in the final chapter of the *Phenomenology*; rather, it (absolute knowledge) refers to the way in which the exposition of the *Phenomenology* itself has guided the observing consciousness

of the reader into comprehending the history of consciousness as its own complex and multi-faceted act and fate (Hegel, 1977: 56–7). The idea of an ‘end of history’ in Hegel’s work encapsulates the paradox of a historically grounded and redeemed claim to a transhistorical truth.

If one interprets Hegel’s conceptions of absolute knowledge and the end of history in terms of spirit’s experience of itself as self-determining, then in what sense is the *Phenomenology* the ‘ladder’ to the *Logic*?¹¹ The answer seems to be that, although within the *Phenomenology* absolute knowledge is experienced, it is not explained or articulated conceptually. It is therefore still the case that there is no conceptual apparatus which could replace binary thinking and would be adequate to comprehend the lessons which have emerged from the experience of consciousness in modernity. Hegel’s logic is precisely concerned with this task. The *Logic* is a highly abstract text; as with the *Phenomenology* it is structured in terms of an immanent development in which the internal inadequacies of particular formulations of concepts lead necessarily to reformulation. In the case of logic, however, this is the immanent dynamic of thought thinking itself in abstraction from any specific historical experience. This does not mean, however, that Hegel sees logic as operating in a vacuum or as transcending material and spiritual reality. The account of thinking (comprehension) which Hegel gives in the *Science of Logic* begins and ends with references to material reality (nature) and subjective experience (spirit). Hegel argues that the science of logic is the outcome of the experience of thought, even as it simultaneously traces its a priori condition. The movement of ‘the concept’ (the process of comprehension) is not confined to the realm of thought alone, but characterizes the internal dynamic of material and spiritual being. This means that science does not and cannot leave phenomenology entirely behind (Hegel, 1969: 44–50; 843).

The *Logic* expounds a form of comprehensive reason (*Vernunft*) which is to replace the bifurcations of judgement (including the bifurcations of reason from spirit and nature) which have already been exposed in the *Phenomenology* (Hegel, 1969: 45). *Vernunft* is used in Hegel’s work in a way which follows Kant’s distinctions between *Verstand* (the understanding or capacity for categorial judgement) and *Vernunft* (reason) in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The former signifies the cognitive capacities of humanity, understood as essentially limited by the inescapability of conditions explored in the transcendental aesthetic (space and time) and analytic (categories) (Kant, 1983: 82–91; 111–19). The latter term is used to refer to that which could

not be directly comprehended, but which in some sense regulates possibilities of both cognitive and moral judgement (Kant, 1983: 532–49). Hegel adopts Kant's vocabulary, but denies his banishing of *Vernunft* to the realm of transcendence. For Hegel, the understanding, the realm of judgement, is identified with the philosophical binary thinking which he wants to reject. Comprehensive (speculative) reason stands for the proper mode of comprehending the world, one which is firmly located within that world rather than beyond it, but is nevertheless in principle without limit. Its limitlessness is to be understood not in terms of linear infinity but in terms of a circle in perpetual movement within and between moments of universality, particularity and individuality (Hegel, 1969: 142–50; 623–63).

According to Hegel, the mistake of previous philosophical logic has been to conceive universal, particular and individual as wholly distinct categories which are brought together in judgements of identity through the copula 'is' (Hegel, 1969: 90–1; 623–63). Hegel argues that this means that judgement can only be understood in terms of subsumption. In order for any proposition to make sense, given the radical distinction of the categories, one term must be subordinated to the other. But if this is done then the notion of the distinctiveness of one element within the proposition is lost and the claim becomes redundant (one-sided thinking). Judgement appears to be stuck between the alternatives of asserting identity or non-identity. However, according to Hegel, this is to lose the way in which any such judgements hold together both identity and non-identity between the terms. Comprehensive reason involves moving beyond the alternatives of reading the relation between subject and predicate in any given proposition as either indifferent otherness or sameness. Instead he insists that the relation is inherently dynamic, simultaneously both identity and non-identity. Any term within a proposition holds universality, particularity and individuality within it (Hegel, 1969: 663).¹²

There are two consequences which follow from the above reading of Hegel's identification of spirit as self-determination and knowledge as an aspect of, as well as recognition of, that self-determination. First, Hegel's conception of philosophical science has to be understood as constructed through the mediations of ethical life. This means that all types of knowledge claims, whether about nature, spirit or reason (*Vernunft*) are radically historicized. Rather than the philosopher standing outside of ethical life on transcendent grounds of judgement, the Hegelian speculative philosopher is always within ethical life and possesses no key to either truth or goodness. Second, however, Hegel's claim to absolute knowledge does not imply the capacity to either

predict or control spirit's self-determination in its entanglement with nature and reason. The shapes taken by spirit do not depend on some form of mental activity but on the open-ended and multifaceted, but always conditioned, agency of objective and subjective spirit. Knower, object and audience are all implicated in a complex, self-changing context, which is ultimately the source of the authority or lack of authority of knowledge claims.¹³

2.2 On Nature, History and Right

At the end of the *Logic*, Hegel speaks of his philosophical project in terms of a circle of circles in which each of the sciences of logic, spirit and nature presuppose and imply each other (Hegel, 1969: 842). The point of Hegel's re-thinking of phenomenal knowledge and reason was to enable a comprehensive grasping of the realms of nature and spirit. This is something which he attempts to do in the *Encyclopaedia* texts, *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind (Geist)*, and in his political philosophy, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. In what follows I offer a brief sketch of the key claims Hegel makes about how nature and spirit are to be understood in general, about the central characteristics of modern ethical life and about the place of women in this account.

Hegel's account of nature is clearly historically conditioned in the sense that it is mediated through the self-understanding of his time as articulated in contemporary natural science (Hegel, 1970b).¹⁴ Much of the text is a series of engagements with alternative theories of inorganic and organic matter, its structure and properties. At the same time, however, Hegel's argument is also grounded on the dialectic of immanent self-development that he demonstrated phenomenologically in the historical experience of consciousness and claimed as the defining principle of comprehensive thought. He is therefore inclined to embrace the scientific view which can be fitted most easily into the overarching logic of his system.¹⁵ Hegel's account of nature therefore is structured in terms of a narrative, in which more comprehensive concepts emerge out of the inadequacies of binary categorization and one-sided thinking. This time, however, the conceptualization of nature is presented as embedded in a material dynamic which culminates in the transition from animal (natural) into spiritual (human) being (Hegel, 1970a: 442–5; 1971: 1–15).

Within the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Mind (Geist)* sexual relations (between male and female mammals rather than

between men and women only) and reproduction figure at the point of transition between comprehending 'animate Nature' (living, organic, bodily existence) and comprehending 'spirit' (self-conscious existence). The significance of sexual intercourse is that within it, even if only at a given moment, 'the distinct existences in their mutual relationship are no longer external to each other but have the feeling of their unity' (Hegel, 1971: 10–11). In the relation between male and female, progenitor and offspring in nature, Hegel claims to discern a dynamic of mutual self-determination and of universality within particularity, which he argues is also crucial to comprehending the nature of spirit. At the same time, however, Hegel is insistent that nature is distinct from spirit, since in nature these dynamics are experienced implicitly as a matter of feeling and instinct, whereas in the realm of spirit they are experienced explicitly as a matter for self-conscious reflection and determination, that is, as food for thought and action.

[T]he transition from Nature to mind (*Geist*) is not a transition to an out-and-out Other, but is only a coming-to-itself of mind out of its externality in Nature. But equally the differentia of Nature and mind is not abolished by this transition, for mind does not proceed in a natural manner from Nature. (Hegel, 1971: 14)

In the *Encyclopaedia* texts Hegel's claims as to the identity and non-identity of nature with spirit are made abstractly. The shift from nature to spirit is presented as a necessary progression of thought, but it is difficult to work out how spirit can both emerge from nature and do so non-naturally. The puzzle as to how to understand Hegel's account of the nature/spirit relation is compounded for feminist interpreters of Hegel by the role played by the female in the processes of sexual intercourse and reproduction, which Hegel argues are so significant for that relation. It is clear that Hegel sees the conception of a clear-cut ontological distinction between natural and spiritual being as misleading. Hegel's account of nature in relation to spirit exemplifies the resistance to the either/or choice of binary thinking which emerged as the key feature of his argument in the *Phenomenology* and *Logic*. But it is not clear what this implies for women or females understood in Hegelian terms. It is notable that not only in the *Encyclopaedia* texts, but also in the *Phenomenology*, women only appear at a point of mediation or transition between natural and spiritual existence.

The two episodes in the *Phenomenology* which have been most important for feminist commentators in establishing the position of women in Hegel's accounts of nature and spirit occur at points in the

text where the notions of spirit and of ethical life are in turn introduced into the argument. These are both points in which the relation between natural (conscious) and spiritual (self-conscious) being are in question. The first point is after Hegel, having exhausted the possibilities of accounts of knowledge relying purely on a contrast between knowing consciousness and its object, introduces self-consciousness onto the scene (Hegel, 1977: 104). This is followed by a discussion of how self-consciousness becomes an object for itself, moving beyond mere awareness of an external world to self-awareness (Hegel, 1977: 104–11). In the most famous passage in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel traces this movement through a struggle for recognition between two self-conscious beings, which passes from a fight to the death to a relationship of master and slave, and of the slave to the external world as something upon which he self-consciously works to create a ‘second nature’ (Hegel, 1977: 111–19). This passage has been significant for Marxist interpretations and uses of Hegel’s work. For Marx, the relationship between the slave and the external world mediated through work, provided inspiration for his materialist account of history, including notions of alienation, class consciousness and class struggle. Later on, Kojève’s focus on the struggle for recognition and the ideal of mutual recognition as the motivating force for historical development and the ‘end of history’ has been extremely influential (Kojève, 1980). The importance of this passage for feminist interpreters will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3. Its significance resides in the way in which it deals with the simultaneous dependence and independence both of self-conscious beings from nature and of self-conscious beings from each other. Feminist commentators have been concerned about the role played in Hegel’s story by the fight between self-conscious beings and the link Hegel makes between risking life, engaging in productive labour and attaining full self-consciousness. In Hegel’s narrative it is clear that all the protagonists are male; if, following Marxist interpreters, these passages in the *Phenomenology* provide the key to historical change then it appears that women are excluded from participation in history (Beauvoir, 1953; Lundgren-Gothlin, 1996).

The second episode in the *Phenomenology* of importance to feminists, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 4, is Hegel’s account of Greek ethical life and its dissolution (Hegel, 1977: 266–89). It takes place at the beginning of Hegel’s relocation of his argument to the realm of objective spirit (that is, particular historical forms of life) and uses the play *Antigone* to provide insight into the failure of a particular way of understanding the relation between familial (kinship) and political spheres. As with the discussion of self-consciousness this

section of the text deals with the relation of self-conscious beings both to nature and to each other, but this time within a socially mediated historical context as opposed to the abstract inter-individual interrelation of the struggle for recognition. In Hegel's treatment of the tragedy, the conflict between Antigone and Creon is represented as the conflict between women's duty to natural ties of kinship and men's to political ties of citizenship.¹⁶ This is the only section of the *Phenomenology* in which women figure as a focus of attention, and the only one in which the relationship between women and men assumes historical significance. Hegel's argument raises issues for feminist readers both because of its identification of women with family duties and because the transition to Rome which follows this passage appears to be one in which women's work is obliterated or historically transcended (Hegel, 1977: 289–94). As with the master/slave dialectic it appears that women lack historical agency on Hegel's account.

Next to the *Phenomenology*, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is Hegel's most well-known work. Its Preface offers the two most frequently quoted statements of Hegel's historicism. The first is his claim that the 'rational' and the 'actual' are identical and that it is the philosopher's task to examine what 'is' rather than what 'ought to be' (Hegel, 1991: 20). This claim is made in contradistinction to political philosophies which aim to set out blueprints for change. The second is his claim that philosophy, like the Owl of Minerva, flies only at the dusk (Hegel, 1991: 23). In other words, that philosophical wisdom is only possible with hindsight. Hegel's philosophy of right covers legal, moral, social, economic and political aspects of ethical life. He begins with the conception of abstract right inherent in modern conceptions of legal personality and the ways in which they are institutionalized in law and conceptions of criminal and civil responsibility and liability (Hegel, 1991: 67–132). He then moves on to the way in which morality and conscience reinforce and underpin legal relations (Hegel, 1991: 135–86). In the last and largest section of the text he examines the broader institutions within which notions of free personality and individual conscience have their place (Hegel, 1991: 189–380). In this section, he differentiates modern ethical life into three spheres: family; civil society; and the state. Family is the private sphere of love and kinship; civil society is the realm of particularity in which individuals pursue their own interests; the state is a collective entity which binds both family members and self-interested persons into a different kind of unity. Along with the treatment of the *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's account of the family and its relation to the other spheres of ethical life in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* constitutes

the main source for working out the place of women within Hegel's philosophical system. On Hegel's account, women's role in contemporary ethical life is confined to the realm of the family. Women are associated with love, marriage and motherhood and kept apart from the realm of contractual relations of civil society. Their role is to care for and to nourish husbands and children, enabling them to take their place within the public sphere of civil society and the state (see chapters 5 and 6).

Hegel's account stresses the mutual dependence and also tensions between the three realms he has distinguished. The family is necessary as the condition for property ownership and citizenship, but it also depends on property and legal relations underpinned by political authority. At the same time, the principles of love which bind the family are threatened by the principles of contract which dominate in civil society. Civil society depends on the institutionalization of laws to protect contract, but its particularity threatens the idea of citizenship, which depends on the citizen's identification with a greater whole of which it is a member. There is no question that the state constitutes the most important element of ethical life for Hegel. He suggests that in the political self-organization of spirit there is a way of holding the disparate and potentially mutually undermining elements of familial and civil existence together (Hegel, 1991: 275). In the final section of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, however, he extends the reach of his account beyond modern ethical life as experienced within the state to the realm of world history, in which he repeats the claim of the *Phenomenology*, that the highest insight into the nature of spirit is incorporated in modern ethical life (notoriously 'the Germanic Realm'): 'The spirit now grasps the *infinite positivity* of its own inwardness, the principle of the unity of divine and human nature and the reconciliation of the objective truth and freedom which have appeared in self-consciousness and subjectivity' (Hegel, 1991: 379).

For a long time in anglophone scholarship, passages such as this one and the claims in the Preface about the identity of the rational and the actual, were taken as confirmation of Hegel's claim to be the philosopher at the literal end of history, celebrating its culmination in the Prussian state. However, in recent years, the latter aspect of the claim has been undermined by recognition in Hegel scholarship that Hegel was not simply reproducing (indeed was actively critical of) the contemporary Prussian state in his political writings (Hegel, 1999). It has therefore become much more common to read Hegel's political philosophy in the 'open' sense noted above, in which the positive meaning of Hegel's critical engagement with modern ethical life (rational

kernel) is rescued from the supposedly untenable claims of his broader philosophical logic or philosophy of history (metaphysical shell). I would argue, however, that Hegel's argument is better understood if it is read in the light of his philosophical logic and philosophy of history. For Hegel, the claim that the rational is actual and that the actual is rational is both modest and ambitious. It is modest in that it makes the point that philosophy is never actually ahead of its time, but is always bound up with the complex actuality and possibilities inherent in the world of which the philosopher is a part. It is ambitious in that it also identifies the principle inherent in this particular philosopher's time and place (which is the product of a specific history) with absolute knowledge, or the self-understanding of spirit as self-determination. For Hegel's reader, the question which becomes crucial is the extent to which he or she identifies with both of these claims.

The *Phenomenology* provides an exploration of the question of how knowledge is possible through an account of the historical development of individual and collective human existence. The *Logic* puts forward Hegel's formal and substantive analysis of the categories of pure thought. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* concerns the principles inherent in the emerging modern state. These texts have very different focuses but they share a common understanding of the nature of truth which is inseparable from a particular, paradoxical account of the status, authority and effects of their own philosophical discourse. All of them make two kinds of claim: first, that the subject and object of knowledge, which are ideally wholly identified in philosophical notions of truth, are always already simultaneously identical and non-identical; second, that the philosopher (whether as writer or reader) is not a legislator or judge working externally to the object of inquiry, but is immanently implicated in the same context which conditions the object of inquiry, its philosophical treatment and any meaning which will be generated in the encounter between the reader and the philosopher's claims. This is true regardless of whether it is the historical development of human existence, the principles of thought or the form of the modern state which is being examined.

What do these two claims mean and how are they related? On my interpretation, the first claim is not to be read in idealist terms as the view that reason constitutes reality, but as an ontological claim about the co-anchoring of subject and object in a shared, material, self-changing reality, which is the medium through which claims to knowledge and self-conscious action are possible. This reality is reducible neither to mind-independent objects nor to object-independent mind. It cannot be treated as something external to which philosophers

gain access through using the correct method, because access is always already in play, but neither is it wholly internal to a particular philosophical consciousness, since any such consciousness is inevitably partial in both synchronic and diachronic terms. The upshot of Hegel's philosophical position is that there is no abstract and ahistorical position from which philosophical problems are either generated or resolved, authored or interpreted. The authority of philosophy cannot in principle transcend historical time and place or be divorced from the degree to which that authority is recognized by the philosopher's readers. The recognition of philosophical authority in turn is dependent on the reader identifying herself within the philosopher's arguments, responding to something which is already in some sense thought or experienced. For feminist readers, therefore, I am suggesting that the plausibility and potential usefulness of Hegel's analysis will rest on the extent to which they identify not only with the claim that philosophy is a child of its time, but with Hegel's account of his time in terms of the understanding of spirit as self-determination.

2.3 Feminist Readings of Hegel

Feminist readers presume the relevance of their own philosophical and political agenda to their interpretation and judgement of philosophical argument. Moreover, feminist readers have demonstrated again and again how philosophical argument presenting itself as the neutral examination and resolution of philosophical problems actually reflects an agenda oppressive and exclusive of women. In linking philosophy inextricably to history, Hegel explicitly acknowledges what feminist readers presume, that is, that both readers and texts have contexts which are crucial to the question of how philosophical arguments and responses to them are able to be understood and evaluated. However, the suggestion that there is a close link between presumptions about philosophy and politics implicit in the project of feminist philosophy, and in Hegel's thought, is not one with which most feminist commentators on Hegel would wholly agree. Feminist readings of Hegel can be grouped according to the four ideal types of feminist philosophy outlined in chapter 1. In each case, not only does the interpretation reflect a type of feminist philosophy, it also reflects engagement with the many ways in which Hegel's work has been interpreted by his successors.

The most common engagement between Hegel and rationalist feminists has been when the former use Hegel to exemplify the masculinism

of the philosophical tradition. This reading standardly takes the form of debunking Hegel's treatment of women, sex and gender within his texts by drawing attention to the error or absurdity of certain of his claims. Hegel's comments on reproduction in his *Philosophy of Nature* and on women and the family in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* are the most frequent target for this kind of reading. In the former text, Hegel argues that the role of the female in reproduction is passive rather than active. He follows Aristotle in suggesting that the female contribution to reproduction is inert matter, which needs the shaping, forming activity of the male in order to become new life (Hegel, 1970a: 413). Rationalist feminist readings point to both the non-sensical nature of this claim in scientific terms and to the way in which it follows traditional gendered value hierarchies embedded in Western philosophy. Similar arguments are made in relation to notorious quotations from *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, in which women are compared to plants and said to be unfit for education (Hegel, 1991: 206–7). More generally, the latter text is read by rationalist commentators as endorsing the necessity of the confinement of women to family and the private sphere and their exclusion from civil society and politics.

Rationalist feminists disagree strongly with many of Hegel's ontological and normative claims relating to gender and sexual difference. It is not, however, the case that readings from a broadly rationalist perspective always simply condemn Hegel. There are also examples where aspects of Hegel's thought are taken to be useful for feminist philosophy. These readings frequently suggest that some of Hegel's insights can be rescued from his persistent masculinism. In particular, Hegel's recognition of the importance of the private sphere as a condition of possibility of modern ethical life, and his critique of the idea of the marriage contract, are seen as providing ammunition for feminist argument even against Hegel's own intentions. Whether positive or negative, however, rationalist feminist responses to Hegel are always made on the basis of an account of truth which presumes objective and independent grounds for the settlement of questions about gender and sexual difference. In this respect, whatever his claims about women, sex and gender, Hegel's philosophy is antithetical to rationalist feminism in so far as it (Hegel's philosophy) historicizes ontological and normative truths.¹⁷

If it is unsurprising that rationalist feminism has engaged little with Hegel's work, it is equally unsurprising that there is a much richer tradition of feminist conversations with Hegel among critical feminist philosophers. Critical feminist philosophy is itself a product of the

left-Hegelian legacy running from Marx through to Habermas. Such readings follow Marx in that they invoke both external and immanent criteria in their interpretation and judgement of Hegel's arguments. They also follow Marx in setting Hegel against Hegel and aiming to rescue the good from the bad Hegel. Unlike the rationalist feminist readings, for critical feminist readings aspects of Hegel's philosophy which are not explicitly concerned with women, sex and gender are crucial, and the focus of reading tends to be on Hegel's *Phenomenology* and his political philosophy rather than his philosophy of nature. Since Beauvoir, the account of the 'struggle for recognition' in the chapter on the emergence of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* has been central to critical feminist identification of the 'good' Hegel. The significance of this aspect of Hegel's argument is not read by all critical feminists in the same way, but for many it provides a useful way of thinking about the interrelation between individual self-consciousness and nature, about intersubjective relations and about the meaning of progress towards freedom. The negative side of Hegel's argument for critical feminists is his identification of women with nature as opposed to self-conscious existence and his consequent exclusion of women from the historical dialectic and progress towards freedom. Here Hegel's treatment of the story of *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology*, and his later account of the place of women in the family in his political philosophy, are taken to testify to the ways in which Hegel fails to acknowledge women's full humanity. Critical feminists vary in the extent to which Hegel's treatment of women, sex and gender is taken to render his philosophy dangerous for feminist purposes. In general, however, critical feminists do not want to reject Hegel's insights altogether, but either to re-work his philosophy to include the vantage point of women or at the very least to plunder it for what is useful from the feminist standpoint.¹⁸

Readings of Hegel have been important from the perspective of a variety of sexual difference feminisms, but in rather different ways. For some such thinkers Hegel figures as the quintessential patriarchal thinker, whose views on sexual difference are to be condemned and transcended in an alternative feminist ethic. Alternatively, particularly for sexual difference feminisms influenced by psychoanalysis, Hegel's work is drawn on much more positively as part of an account of the formation of gendered selves.¹⁹ The significance of Hegel's work has been particularly marked for sexual difference feminisms which have been influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis.²⁰ Typically, in the psychoanalytic sexual difference approach, the claims made in Hegel's texts are demonstrated to themselves depend on that which they claim

to have transcended in the discussion of sexual difference. This kind of reading does not look beyond the text to prove its validity, but demonstrates how the text subverts itself from within and confirms even as it denies the significance of sex and gender. The focus of such readings is on the points at which the apparent trajectory of Hegel's narrative is potentially disturbed by internal contradictions or can be subverted through paying attention to considerations which have been excluded or marginalized in the text. As with critical feminism, Hegel's treatment of the *Antigone* has been one particular focus of attention for sexual difference readers, pointing to the way in which the exclusion of women conditions the possibility of the onward march of spirit in Hegel's account. The point of this kind of reading is not to debunk or to make use of Hegel's arguments but to indicate an alternative condition of possibility for meaning, one which does not so much replace as run parallel to the dominant masculinist discourse. This kind of reading is not a straightforward rejection (Hegel's arguments are not simply debunked and dismissed). Rather, Hegel's substantive claims about women are taken seriously as demonstrating the presuppositions of masculinist discourse – something which is a necessary step in the articulation of alternative grounds for truth and meaning. Nevertheless, this kind of deconstructive reading shares with the dismissive reading the assumption that Hegel's texts are to be understood essentially as a closed patriarchal system.²¹

Critical feminism and sexual difference feminism come to Hegel with feminist concerns but also via the theoretical traditions of Marxism and psychoanalysis. Postmodernist feminist readings of Hegel encounter Hegel in ways mediated through the deconstruction of both Marxism and psychoanalysis, as well as Hegel's thought, in the philosophies of thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard. As with critical and sexual difference feminists, postmodernist feminists read Hegel in terms of the tensions internal to his analysis. However, for postmodernist feminists this reading resists the setting up of any alternative perspective for interpretation, judgement or meaning, whether that of an inclusive dialectical narrative of progress or of the idea of speaking or writing as a woman. The accent in postmodernist readings is on destabilizing the authority internal to Hegel's texts, a process of immanent debunking in which new insights are generated via a constant process of subversion. For postmodernist readers, Hegel is above all presenting himself as a closed and totalizing thinker. In demonstrating the gaps, tensions and contradictions in his text, therefore, postmodernist readers are demonstrating the arbitrariness of the philosophical authority which stakes a claim to absolute knowledge.

For postmodernist readers the gaps, tensions and contradictions within texts are not simply a matter of inconsistent claims or inadequate argument. They read texts rhetorically, in terms of what they effect through language, rather than in terms of what they may have been intended to report on or reflect. This emphasis on rhetoric, however, draws attention to the self-conscious rhetoricity of Hegel's own texts and has led to a focus on parallels between the activities of dialectic and deconstruction. Postmodernist feminists have found the play of meaning and authority in Hegel's texts, particularly the *Phenomenology*, sympathetic to their own approach. However, in the end, whereas the moment of authoritative interpretation is always deferred in postmodernist feminism, Hegel is read as ultimately closing down that deferral.²²

The differences between the feminist readers of Hegel are deeply significant in the questions they raise about both feminist philosophy and Hegel's philosophy. In spite of Hegel's marginalization and denigration of women within his philosophical work, feminist philosophers have continued to read and engage with his arguments, and to some extent find in him a partner in a collaborative enterprise in the sense suggested by Lloyd (Lloyd, 2000: 257). This is particularly so where the feminist philosophies in question share ground with Hegel, as is clearly the case with certain critical, sexual difference and postmodernist feminist perspectives which are locatable within philosophical traditions influenced by Hegelian ideas. The faults which the different feminist philosophers find with Hegel echo those which, as we saw in chapter 1, they find with each other and return persistently to the problem of overcoming the gendered binary hierarchies in which philosophical conceptualization is enmeshed. Hegel is found to be useful to the extent he challenges or provides insights into the inadequacies of mainstream thinking about woman, sex and gender. However, his work is condemned to the extent that it is seen to fall back into faults of essentialism and universalism which reinforce the patriarchal conceptual order.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I made the claim that feminist philosophy and political ideology in general are characterized by patterns of thought which replay an oscillation between hierarchical (necessarily one-sided) binary thinking and resistance to binary thinking. Feminist philosophy is perpetually caught up in and perpetually dissatisfied by

the either/or choice between accepting or overturning the conceptual distinctions central to mainstream philosophy. The problem is always how to think what it means to be a woman and what it would mean to be emancipated as a woman in a way which does not reduce to either 'good father' or 'rebellious daughter' alternatives. It is in this respect I would argue that the collaboration between feminist thinking and the misogynist philosopher, Hegel, can be most fruitful. The different interpretations of Hegel outlined above, even when they acknowledge the value of certain aspects of Hegel's thinking nevertheless view his thought as ultimately collapsing back into binary oppositions, which bar the way for feminist thought and action. In this sense, feminist philosophers echo Hegel's critique of Kant and the French Revolution in their own critique of Hegel. I want to suggest, however, that Hegel's misogyny has meant that even the most sympathetic of his feminist critics have not fully appreciated the parallels between their own ambivalent response to philosophical reason in modernity and Hegel's. This means that Hegel's work may be a more useful resource, or at the very least closer to the concerns of feminist philosophers, than any of the above readings imply. In the chapters which follow, I will demonstrate that Hegel's account of the relation between nature, spirit (culture) and reason (philosophy) can be useful to feminist efforts to conceptualize women, sex and gender in a way which resists the one-sidedness of dominant binary thinking in ontology, epistemology, moral and political theory.

3

Thinking the Second Sex

Introduction

Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* has a distinctive place in the canon of feminist philosophy. As the first post-World War II work to look seriously at the question of what it means to be a woman, it is a standard reference point for the 'second wave' of feminism which gained ground in the West twenty years after the book's first publication. But it is also a text which has been received with admiration and hostility in just about equal measure within the feminist movement over the past thirty years. Whichever response is in question, Beauvoir's analysis is most frequently presented in histories of feminist theory as surpassed in terms of its empirical content, its dualistic existentialist framework and its mixed liberal and socialist normative agenda.¹ Feminist biologists and anthropologists have argued that Beauvoir relied on outdated and misogynistic science in her accounts of biology and patriarchy in *The Second Sex*. Feminist philosophers and theorists have taken issue with Beauvoir's accounts of the body, of subjectivity and of agency. Politically, Beauvoir's mix of liberal and socialist prescriptions has been challenged by sexual difference and postmodernist feminisms, as remaining tied to a masculinist evaluation of productive over reproductive work and androcentric assumptions about the meaning of emancipation. Beauvoir has been accused of misogyny in her portrayal of women's reproductive functions and of falling into the patriarchal trap of arguing that the key to women's liberation is that they should be like men. Beauvoir's defenders, on the other hand, have argued that this is to neglect Beauvoir's assertion of the distinctiveness of women's embodied existence, and the

radical nature of her message given the time and context in which she wrote. In particular, her most famous claims, that woman is 'other' and the assertion that one 'is not born but rather becomes a woman' have been argued to be crucial to the subsequent development of feminist thought (Beauvoir, 1953: 273).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine closely the way in which Beauvoir figures as an influential mediator and translator of Hegelian themes for feminist philosophy.² As such, it will be argued, Beauvoir's work epitomizes the complexity, difficulty and potential of the engagement between feminist philosophy and Hegel's work. This is because it both sets up Hegelian categories as a target for feminist criticism and suggests ways in which elective affinities between Hegelianism and feminist philosophy might operate. It will be argued that Beauvoir's use of Hegel is heavily influenced by the Kojévian and Sartrean interpretations and adaptations of certain sections of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and also that her reading of what it means to be a woman frequently appears constrained by the Hegelian dualisms (drawn from these interpretations) upon which she relies for her analysis. It will further be argued that Beauvoir's characterization of women's situation calls for a different way of thinking than that provided by Hegelian categories understood through Kojève and Sartre. Such a way of thinking may be located in my alternative account of the logic of Hegelian phenomenology, but also in many of Beauvoir's own phenomenological insights into the nature of embodied, intersubjective existence as put forward in both *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*. Thus one can put one version of Beauvoir and of Hegelianism against another.

The chapter will begin with an examination of Beauvoir's relation to Hegel's work in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Within this work Hegel figures as both a resource for analysis and as a constitutive 'other' of the existentialist ethics which Beauvoir, along with Sartre, seeks to articulate. Hegelian ideas, mediated through Sartre's interpretation of Hegel, specifically those to do with relations between self-conscious being and external objects and between different self-conscious beings, play a central role in a positive sense in Beauvoir's analysis. Hegelian notions of 'spirit' (in the sense of social or collective existence, i.e., objective spirit) and of 'history' (in the sense of a teleological progress) represent that which is incompatible with existentialism. At the same time, however, within Beauvoir's text a subversive Hegelianism which is strongly reminiscent of Kojève's account of the emergence of self-conscious being in Hegel's *Phenomenology* promises the possibility of mutual recognition between self-conscious beings which is denied

in Sartre's account of relations between individual existents. In the second section I will turn to examine Beauvoir's relation to Hegel's work in *The Second Sex*. In this text, in which Beauvoir famously draws directly on Hegel's work, Hegelian accounts of the emergence of self-conscious being in relation both to organic nature and to other self-conscious beings are explicitly central to Beauvoir's analysis of the concept of 'woman'. This section will trace the way in which Beauvoir draws on Hegel in her analysis and the tensions and difficulties this sets up for her argument. On the basis of the analysis of the first two sections, section 3.3 will go back to the crucial passages in Hegel's work dealing with the relation between nature and spirit, self and other, individual and collective (social), and the accounts in the *Phenomenology* of the shift from life to self-consciousness and the struggle for recognition. The existentialist interpretation of those passages will be critically examined in relation to an alternative reading, and the question of the relation between the philosophies of Beauvoir and Hegel in both *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex* will be re-examined. In conclusion, the significance of Beauvoir's relation to Hegel for her legacy to later feminist philosophy will be considered. It will be argued that those aspects of Beauvoir's argument which bring her closest to the mode of Hegelian thinking discussed in the previous chapter hold out the promise of an approach to comprehending sex and gender in non-binary terms. This is in spite of the fact that the later feminist reception of her work frequently invokes her reliance on Hegel as responsible for the failure of her philosophy to transcend the hierarchical conceptual binaries of the philosophical tradition in which woman always remains 'other' and less than man.

3.1 Ambiguities

The *Ethics of Ambiguity* (Beauvoir, 1997; first published 1948) is well known as Beauvoir's attempt to formulate an existentialist ethics, that is to say an ethics premised on the account of the lack at the heart of any human existence ('the being whose being is not to be') given by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 1958; first published 1943). The 'ambiguity' of the title refers to the dualities constitutive of what it means to be human: being and existence; nature and freedom; subject and object; existent and other; individual and social; life and death. Key existentialist premises of Beauvoir's argument are: the radically separate nature of each human being; the inescapability of choice and responsibility; the importance of 'situation' for freedom;

and human existence defined as 'becoming', that is as a striving towards but a perpetual inability to attain a settled end or fixed essence. Like Sartre, Beauvoir insists on the impossibility of an a priori determination of the meaning or value of action – there are no recipes for right action and all action is risk and failure. The implications of existentialism for ethics are worked through in relation to standard charges of solipsism and nihilism made against existentialism and in relation to the weaknesses of alternative ethical approaches: Christian, utilitarian or communist (Beauvoir, 1997: 7–34). Two emphases stand out in Beauvoir's analysis, which appear to distance her position from Sartre's: first, Beauvoir is insistent that freedom be seen as not only concretely situated but also as affected or limited by situation in a way which has implications for both action and judgement (1997: 38); second, Beauvoir insists that the freedom of any individual is dependent on the freedom of others (1997: 73). Thus Beauvoir argues that the freedom available to slaves or to the woman in a harem is affected by the limitations of that situation, and can be judged only in terms of that situation. However genuine and perfect is the assertion of freedom within such a context, it is not to be compared with the freedom which is enabled when challenging that situation becomes a concrete possibility (this at least suggests the possibility of qualitative distinctions between different sorts of freedom, something which is difficult to square with the Sartrean ontology of *Being and Nothingness*). Similarly, although Beauvoir accepts the existentialist view of the radical separateness of human individuals and the challenge posed by each individual's projects to those of each other, she is nevertheless insistent that encounters with others confirm the indissoluble interconnection between one's own freedom and that of others, so that to will one's freedom is to will the other's also. Within her argument Beauvoir is as critical of an ethic of pure transcendence as she is of any ethic premised on a determinist account of human nature or progress.

Very close to the beginning of the text, Beauvoir introduces Hegelian thought as the 'other' of existentialism, a systematic philosophy entailing an ethics in which the tragic ambiguity of the human condition for each individual is sublated in the unambiguous triumph of the collective (world spirit) in history (1997: 8). At the end of the text she invokes Hegel again with a more personalized reference. She recounts how she found Hegel's systematic philosophy tremendously comforting when reading it in 1940, but that what it offered, in fact, were the 'consolations of death' under the guise of the 'infinite' (1997: 158). Beauvoir draws the contrast between Hegelian absolutism, in

which each individual becomes simply an instrument of a larger plan, and existentialism, in which the finitude of the human condition is recognized without evasion. Beauvoir is particularly anxious to distance herself from what she terms Hegelian 'rationalistic optimism' in which the concrete and particular gains meaning only in the light of the larger agenda of world history. Beauvoir locates the significance of any action in the meaning it has for the specific, concrete individuals engaging in it: 'In order for this world to have any importance, in order for our undertaking to have a meaning and to be worthy of sacrifices, we must affirm the concrete and particular thickness of this world and the individual reality of our projects and ourselves' (1997: 106).

This defining contrast between Hegelianism and an ethics of ambiguity is accompanied throughout the text by Beauvoir's utilization of Hegelian categories and references in her accounts of relations between individual and collective, subject and object, self and other and their implications for ethics.³ A passage of particular interest here is one where Beauvoir, in the context of discussing the temporality of human existence, illustrates these distinctions through the example of festival:

the ethics of being is the ethics of saving: by storing up, one aims at the stationary plenitude of the in-itself, existence, on the contrary, is consumption; it makes itself only by destroying; the festival carries out this negative movement in order to indicate its independence in relationship to the thing: one eats, drinks, lights fires, breaks things and spends time and money; one spends them for nothing. The spending is also a matter of establishing a communication of the existants, for it is by the movement of recognition which goes from one to the other that existence is confirmed; in songs, laughter, dances, eroticism, and drunkenness one seeks both an exaltation of the moment and complicity with other men. (Beauvoir, 1997: 126)

Beauvoir goes on to point out how the experience of the pure affirmation of existence in the festival is illusory, 'the joy becomes exhausted, drunkenness subsides into fatigue'. It is illusory because the absolute assertion of existence is an impossibility, a denial of the undeniability of death.⁴

The use of the example of the festival as an illustration of the temporality of existence provides a clear contrast with Hegel's famous invocation of festival at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here Hegel claims: 'The True is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk; yet because each member collapses as soon

as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose' (Hegel, 1977: 27). In Beauvoir's use of the festival metaphor, as in Hegel's, the reader is told a great deal, first, about the author's conception of the relation between individual and collective identities and ends; second, about the author's conception of the relation of individual existents to external nature; and third, about the author's conception of the relations between existents. Hegel claims that the 'revel' continues even as individuals drop out exhausted, and argues that true meaning lies in the recollection of the whole of the movement. Beauvoir insists that the revel cannot be sustained as each existent moves beyond the moment towards death. Mortality disrupts the transitory, spontaneous collective and undermines attempts to capture the present or the past in terms of a 'mythical Historical end' or totalized, intelligible historical process. In this sense Beauvoir's account of the festival confirms her distance from Hegelianism in terms of the way the relation between individual and collective identities and ends is understood.

However, a less opposed position can be discerned in the second and third ways in which Beauvoir echoes Hegel's thought within the passage quoted above; both of these refer us back to the story of the emergence of self-consciousness as told in Hegel's *Phenomenology* (1977: 104–19). This short section of the text was crucial to the French revival of interest in Hegel's thought in the 1930s and 1940s, and figures centrally in both Sartre's and Kojève's readings. It is worth reminding ourselves of the subject matter of Hegel's argument and the key ideas derived from it by Sartre and Kojève, before returning to Beauvoir's analysis. This section of Hegel's text deals with an account of the development of self-consciousness through relation first to 'life' (organic nature) and then to another self-consciousness. As Butler has argued (Butler, 1999), what is crucial to both Kojève's and Sartre's interpretations of Hegel in these passages is the understanding of the role of self-consciousness as a principle of negativity. Self-consciousness is understood as that which identifies itself through encountering and distinguishing itself from that which it is not.

In Kojève's version of this story this becomes a two-stage process. First, one in which human desire distinguishes itself from animal desire, finding itself dissatisfied with the confirmation of its existence to be derived from following instinctual drives to consume or sexually possess natural externality (since this is an infinite process of enslavement to the species) (Kojève, 1980: 6; Hegel, 1977: 104–11). Second, one in which dissatisfied self-consciousness attempts to satisfy its craving for self-certainty through recognition by another self-consciousness

(Kojève, 1980: 11–30; Hegel, 1977: 111–19). The process of encounter and distinction of one self-consciousness with and from another is first manifested as a mutual negation, in which self-consciousnesses confirm their self-certainty through their capacity to return the other to external nature through killing them (the life and death struggle). But this turns out to be an unsatisfactory outcome, returning self-consciousness to the situation of animal desire in which the other is simply a natural object. This is followed by a different resolution in which the combatants in the life and death struggle recognize their dependence on organic life, both their own and that of the other, as a condition for self-conscious being and a different outcome follows. This outcome involves a winner and a loser. From this a pattern of recognition is established on the unequal basis of lordship or mastery (independent self-consciousness) and slavery (dependent self-consciousness). Within this relationship the position of the two self-consciousnesses is gradually reversed as the slave gains independence from, and is educated by, the experience of productive work, in which he reshapes the world in the service of the master, whereas the lord remains fixed in the stance of the life/death struggle, depending for his self-certainty on recognition by an other who is deemed as thing-like. Drawing on Marxism, Kojève argues that the ‘master/slave dialectic’ presents the key to historical development which is teleologically determined not simply by self-consciousness’s capacity to reshape the world but by the willed goal of mutual recognition, in which the freedom of each other is confirmed in the mutual recognition of each other as free.

Sartre’s reading of these passages has some things in common with Kojève but is less optimistic. Whereas Kojève makes a very clear distinction between the relation to the object involved in both animal desire and work on the one hand and the relation to other self-consciousnesses on the other, Sartre denies the possibility of the simultaneous mutual recognition of self-conscious being by self-conscious being.⁵ For Sartre, the relation to another self-conscious being is always one in which one or other of the two self-consciousnesses is objectified. This does not imply that one or other self-consciousness *becomes* an object, but it does mean that ‘between the Other-as-object and Me-as-subject there is no common measure’ (Sartre, 1958: 243). For Sartre, the most significant point in Hegel’s analysis is the life and death struggle, which Sartre argues captures the inherent separation and conflict of self-consciousnesses and the idea of organic nature (object) and other self-consciousnesses (others) as the situation within and against which self-consciousness strives to define itself.

Returning to Beauvoir's account of the festival above, it is evident that in her equation of existence with destruction/consumption she follows not only Bataille, but also a Kojévian and Sartrean version of Hegel's account of the emergence of self-consciousness from life in the *Phenomenology*. It is clear from this excerpt, as from other passages in the text, that in her interpretation of the distinction between being and existence Beauvoir reads the Hegelian story as the demonstration of nature (organic life) as a condition of, but as radically distinct from, existence (self-conscious being). Nature is a condition of existence in two senses: first, because existence is always embodied and thereby mortal (temporal); second, because nature provides the raw material of the situation which existence is defined as oriented to negate and transcend. In her account of the relation of existents to each other in the festival, however, Beauvoir follows Kojève as opposed to Sartre with her emphasis on the centrality of mutual recognition to existence, which departs clearly from the Sartrean conception of the fundamental separation and opposition of existents. Although Beauvoir soon moves on to describe this moment of mutual recognition as illusory, her account fits in with her own emphasis on intersubjectivity throughout the text and offers a way of grasping the mutual dependence of freedoms which she continually stresses.

It is clear that Beauvoir's analysis relies on conceptual binary oppositions between individual and collective (social), subject (existence) and object (being), and self and other. Of these three dualities, the first and second operate relatively unproblematically in Beauvoir's analysis. The relation between individual and collective is consistently presented in terms of the irreducibility of the former to the latter. This is described as essential to the possibility of individual choice which is the ground of ethics. Even if an individual embraces a collective end or identity, that end or identity did not choose him or her but was chosen, and must continue to be chosen, by him or her (Beauvoir, 1997: 22–3; 112–13). To identify the individual with the collective or with a transcendent end is to attempt to subsume existence under being. For Beauvoir, this is to misunderstand the fact that being is the unreachable aim of existence, which is always marked by negativity. The being-in-itself of the given situation, the facticity of 'things', impedes but also confirms the freedom at the heart of existence; it is a crucial, enabling alienation (1997: 81). However, if Beauvoir's account of the distinction between individual and collective, existence and being, is clear, her account of the relation between self and other is more complex and obscure. Beauvoir explains and illustrates the mutual dependence of existents at different points in

the text, most clearly in the chapter 'Personal Freedom and Others'. This chapter presents fundamentally instrumental arguments: Beauvoir argues that other people are like things in that their projects constitute the facticity through which my freedom is simultaneously denied and affirmed (or rather in being denied is affirmed); in addition, she argues that the impossibility of meaningful projection, in a world in which there were no other existents to pursue your ends beyond your death, puts those who will their own freedom but not that of others in an absurd or contradictory position. 'I concern others and they concern me. There we have an irreducible truth. The me-others relationship is as indissoluble as the subject-object relationship' (Beauvoir, 1997: 72).

However, this instrumental acknowledgement of human interdependence, which mirrors Beauvoir's acknowledgement of the importance of facticity in the assertion of freedom, is very different from the relation between individuals suggested in her account of the festival given above. Here the relation between individuals has a radically different character from their relation to things, here existence is confirmed in destruction of things and in complicity with others. Not only in the example of the festival, but in many of her examples of ethical action and the significance of each individual's freedom for the other, Beauvoir suggests, with Kojève, that the mutual dependence of existents goes beyond an instrumental relation. Instead, it implies a commonality between subjects which is more than a mirroring of identical and potentially conflictual predicaments. It is clear that any such interpretation cuts against Beauvoir's own insistence on the radical separateness of individuals as the basis of any shared projects. Nevertheless, there is a tension between Beauvoir's existentialist premises and the ethic of identification with the freedom of others which emerges in the text as exemplary. Answering the question of how intersubjectivity is to be understood threatens to unravel the key existentialist assumptions of her argument. This is something Beauvoir acknowledged in her later assessment of the argument of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Green, 1999: 180).

3.2 How Has 'Woman' Come to Be?

The three dualities which shape Beauvoir's analysis of the meaning of festival in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* continue to play a role in her very different project in *The Second Sex*, but within the latter text the stability of these constitutive dualities becomes more clearly uncertain.

The Second Sex begins with the question 'what is a woman?' (Beauvoir, 1953: 19). Almost at once, however, this question is reformulated according to existentialist assumptions that existents have no fixed essence, so that the question becomes: how does a woman come to be? Answering this question requires extensive analysis of all the elements of woman's ontological and historical situation within which she is defined and defines herself as an existent. At the outset of her argument, Beauvoir states explicitly that it (her argument) is premised on Sartrean existentialism. At the same time, however, Beauvoir draws on the work of a range of other thinkers during the course of her analysis, among whom Hegel is particularly prominent. Within the text, the usage of Hegel departs from the pattern of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* in that, rather than the systematic Hegel being foregrounded in opposition to Beauvoir's own analysis, the Hegelian account of sexual difference in nature and the Hegelian story of the struggle for recognition and its outcome are explicitly used as resources for understanding what it means to be/become a woman. In particular, Beauvoir's attempt to think what it means to be/become a woman relies on framing her (woman's) situation in terms of Hegel's account of the emergence of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, together with a particular interpretation of the relation between nature (being) and spirit (existence), self and other, individual and social within this account. Nevertheless, as with *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir's Hegel remains very much poised between the readings of the significance of these dualities given by Sartre and Kojève. Self-consciousness is conditioned by but clearly distinguished from organic life and material objects; and relations between existents shift uneasily between the necessarily oppositional and the mutually sustaining.

The first chapter of Part One of *The Second Sex* has become notorious for its negative characterization of female biology. Beauvoir presents her analysis as being the 'biological facts' and draws on sources which map female mammalian biology in terms of passivity and enslavement to the species via reproduction, as opposed to the male mammal's activity, greater individuality and self-containment. The evocation of femaleness within this section of the text is frequently compared with Sartre's linking of woman's sexuality to 'holes and slime' and, in general, a sense of distaste for the fleshiness of animal existence pervades Beauvoir's language (Sartre, 1958: 613–14). It is certainly the case that, in discussing sexual relations physiologically in the animal kingdom, Beauvoir repeatedly discerns a pattern in which males are active and penetrating while females are

passive and receptive (Beauvoir, 1953: 47). A key point to emerge from the analysis of sex and reproduction is an argument for the in-built alienation between the female animal as an individual and her reproductive functions, which are determined by the biologically programmed drive to perpetuate the species. The female mammal is always 'other than herself', in that she is both an individuated physical being and the vessel of the species. This is not to say that Beauvoir sees the male mammal as transcending the species, but she does argue that the male mammal does not live the alienation between individual and species existence in the immediate way in which the female does through pregnancy and lactation. In this respect, Beauvoir follows Hegel's analysis of sexual difference in his *Philosophy of Nature*, in which male sexual and reproductive roles are associated with a principle of activity and individuation and female sexual and reproductive roles with passivity and species identification (Beauvoir, 1953: 52). Moreover, Beauvoir argues that this individual/species alienation is carried over into the lives of women as an experienced reality, in so far as all women are female mammals: 'From puberty to menopause woman is the theatre of a play that unfolds within her and in which she is not personally concerned' (1953: 55). The certainty that individuals are mortal and species survive is physiologically ingrained in woman, who is both individual and species at the same time (in an exaggerated sense according to Beauvoir's account of human female physiology). For Beauvoir, however, this experience of the 'other' within represents an asymmetrical reversal of what we know to be the meaning of human existence. Physiologically, for the female, what is infinite and undifferentiated dominates over what is finite and individuated, rather than vice versa. Pregnancy is understood as a sign of the species – a continuous chain of reproduction which is exhausting to contemplate, literally devouring or using up the female's body.⁶

In spite of her negative characterization of the 'facts' of female biology, Beauvoir rejects (and in doing so is explicitly critical of Hegel) the idea that there can be any significance for biology in accounting for how woman has come to be independent of the 'ontological, economic, social, and psychological context' (Beauvoir, 1953: 35–6). She argues that this is true whether one understands the body as pure facticity (a thing) or in phenomenological terms (her own position) as 'the instrument of our grasp upon the world, a limiting factor for our projects' (1953: 61). In other words, the body situates the self and its striving for transcendence; how it does so depends on how non-biological factors also figure as situation. This does not mean that

biology has no importance at all; Beauvoir returns repeatedly in her analysis to woman's bodily situation as a key aspect of her peculiar evolution as an existent, particularly within undeveloped primitive societies.⁷ However, this is always of less importance than the fact that female humans are not only animals, they are existents and therefore cannot be reduced to biological terms.

As Merleau-Ponty very justly puts it, man is not a natural species: he is a historical idea. Woman is not a completed reality, but rather a becoming, and it is in her becoming that she should be compared with man; that is to say, her *possibilities* should be defined. (1953: 61)

At the heart of Beauvoir's argument as to the nature of woman's 'possibilities' is the notion of woman as 'other'. Beauvoir argues that there are two conceptions of 'other' which play a part in understanding how woman in the modern age has come to be, both of them echoing stages of Hegel's story of the development of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. The first conception is of woman as 'Other' with a capital 'O', what Beauvoir refers to as the 'absolute other' of existence: defined as essence, pure in-itself or organic life. When 'Other' is understood in this sense, the relation between man and woman is subsumed under the relation between subject and object, between which there is a fundamental and intractable alienation. As such, woman becomes simultaneously the object of consumption by existence and the mystical representation of its limit. In the former sense, woman is the target of pure negativity, to be possessed, shaped and controlled. In the latter sense, woman becomes an object of fear and awe, associated both with that which sustains but also takes us beyond the finite, whether understood as fecundity or death. Beauvoir locates this mode of thinking woman in early agricultural societies, with the worship of woman as Earth Goddess and with the myth of matriarchy. She is insistent that even where woman is attributed magical powers and status, this categorization of woman as Other sets the scene for the subordination of women (1953: 98) 'To the precise degree that woman is regarded as the absolute Other – that is to say, whatever her magic powers, as the inessential – it is to that degree impossible to consider her as another subject' (1953: 96). In the Hegelian story of the emergence of self-consciousness, this conception of woman traps her within nature and the relationship between life and self-conscious being, as necessary but alien to man's existence. Although Beauvoir is clear that this categorization of woman works to the advantage of male interests and helps to ground patriarchal

civilization, she does not account for it in terms of some kind of self-conscious, active subjugation of women by men. For Beauvoir, the sources of this early (primitive) way of thinking have to do with woman's role in reproduction and her inability in technologically limited societies to assert herself beyond her bodily situation of biological enslavement to the species. Even though, for Beauvoir, it is axiomatic that humans are always already existents, she suggests that woman's situation within primitive society lends itself to the denial of her existence and her acquiescence in this denial.

In the Hegelian story, it is first the detachment of the individual from a purely species-oriented existence and then the capacities of individuals to fight and to work which mark the transitions to self-conscious being. The second conception of woman as 'other' in Beauvoir's account brings woman into the play of intersubjectivity and the struggle for recognition in a part analogous to (but not the same as) that of the loser and slave in Hegel's story, defined as dependent existence, recognized as complementing and servicing the needs of the master.

Certain passages in the argument employed by Hegel in defining the relation of master to slave apply much better to the relation of man to woman. The advantage of the master, he says, comes from his affirmation of Spirit as against Life through the fact that he risks his own life; but in fact the conquered slave has known this same risk. Whereas woman is basically an existent who gives Life and does not risk *her* life; between her and the male there has been no combat. Hegel's definition would seem to apply especially well to her. He says: 'The other consciousness is the dependent consciousness for whom the essential reality is the animal type of life; that is to say, a mode of living bestowed by another entity.' (1953: 90)

The analogy between the slave and woman is clear not only in terms of their consignment to service roles, but more importantly in the way in which they are necessary to the master. The master cannot be satisfied with relations to mere life and external objects, he needs an 'other' subject to confirm his existence as something more than life. For this reason, on the one hand, the lord spares the life of the slave and, on the other, is unable to consign woman wholly to the status of absolute 'Other'. However, when 'other' is understood in this sense, according to Hegel, there are two pathways open towards confirmation of self-conscious being: fighting and productive work. For Beauvoir, woman's position is never quite that of Hegel's slave to the extent that those pathways have been closed to her. She is particularly insistent

that the fact that women have not voluntarily and non-naturally risked their lives has fundamentally affected the likelihood of their recognition as equals to their male oppressors. Even when understood in terms of 'becoming' rather than 'being', therefore, Beauvoir argues consistently that woman is cast (by men and by herself) as a very particular kind of other, one faced with different sorts of barriers than those blocking the path to full recognition of slaves.⁸

On Beauvoir's account, woman is positioned from the earliest times as neither being nor existence, or as simultaneously being and existence, in a way which disrupts thinking 'under the sign of duality' which is itself the mark of existence as opposed to being. This positioning, while in complete contradiction to the nature of women as existents, is not inexplicable in the light of the physical, social and economic context of primitive agricultural societies and the forms of legal, social and economic organization that have succeeded them. Beauvoir transposes Hegel's account of the emergence of self-consciousness from life onto an historical stage and her analysis becomes in effect the tracing of the possibilities of asserting women's being as existence in different historical eras, from the ancient world to modernity. She attempts to re-write the *Phenomenology of Spirit* from the perspective of woman.

Men have presumed to create a feminine domain – the kingdom of life, of immanence – only in order to lock women therein. But it is regardless of sex that the existent seeks self-justification through transcendence – the very submission of women is proof of that statement. What they demand today is to be recognized as existents by the same right as men and not to subordinate existence to life, the human being to its animality. (1953: 90)

Beauvoir argues that the key to changing women's concrete situation is the shift from defining woman as 'Other' to defining women as 'others'. But this has to be a shift beyond the servile 'other' analogous to Hegel's slave, towards a mutual recognition between men and women as equal freedoms. There is no road to proper recognition for women, in Beauvoir's view, which can go via the identification with 'woman' as 'Other', since all the characteristics of this position, involve her identification with 'being' rather than existence. At the same time, however, the road to recognition from women's position as 'other' is also fraught with difficulty. Women must also resist the dominant identification of her as 'other' to man, as this identification has been constructed by men seeking to confirm their own transcendence

through confining woman to a realm of immanence. In Beauvoir's analysis the key to changing women's situation is changing the way in which she is thought by men and thinks of herself through masculine eyes. This has significant implications, as Green has noted, for the way in which Beauvoir understands both women's oppression and their liberation (Green, 1999: 175–9).

In seeing the master/slave dialectic as central to understanding how women have come to be as they are, Beauvoir, like Kojève, puts intersubjective recognition at the heart of both oppression and liberation. In Beauvoir's case, however, work does not function in the same way to give the slave a clear independent route to freedom. Beauvoir does see lack of access to productive work as an important part of women's historical inability to define themselves in terms of transcendent projects. She argues that times during the course of history when women have worked outside of the domestic context have raised the status of women. She also argues that the technological advances which have given women control over reproduction, together with the increasing involvement of women in independent work, signify a huge improvement in women's situation.⁹ But whereas the slave is wholly engaged in productive work, women have not generally been placed in this position. Even in contexts where women do work independently of the household, they retain their reproductive physiology and role along with their domestic responsibilities to maintain and sustain the material being of others. These latter tasks cannot lead to women's confirmation of their own existence as becoming rather than being because these tasks are 'species' tasks, not just metaphorically but actually confined to the realm of immanence.¹⁰

To a large extent, therefore, Beauvoir endorses the dominant (masculinist) assessment of what it means to be a woman, and suggests that women therefore depend on men to recognize their freedom in spite of their (women's) inevitably different situation. At the same time, however, it is clear that in so far as the pattern of recognition changes, what it means for women to be confirmed as independent existents is to be recognized as what man already is, constantly defining himself in transcendence of nature and facticity. Mutual recognition between women as women has only limited liberatory potential outside of the conversion of the male perspective which defines how women see themselves and each other, partly because this is how they themselves and each other actually are. Thus Beauvoir's accounts of both oppression and liberation depend on the masculine point of view, which is also the point of view of the genuine existent, and on her initial account of women's biological disadvantage. 'Man's true

victory whether he is liberator or conqueror lies just in this: that woman freely recognizes him as her destiny' (1953: 199). This is true both in the 'bad faith' identification of woman with man's view of her, and in the authentic embracing by women of their own destiny as free existents.

The outcome of Beauvoir's use of the paradigm of the 'struggle for recognition' has profoundly uncomfortable consequences for feminism in that it seems to leave us with a choice between the impossibility of women's transcendence on the one hand and liberation construed as becoming man on the other. This has led many feminist commentators to see reliance on Hegel as the key to the weaknesses of Beauvoir's argument. However, I would suggest that a more satisfactory critical response is to argue that Beauvoir's use of Hegelian ideas in fact reflects tensions between Kojévian and Sartrean accounts of human existence and their implications. The tension between Sartre and Kojève is made apparent through the question of how the gap, first between the life and death struggle and the master/slave dialectic, and then the master/slave dialectic and mutual recognition of self-consciousnesses, can be bridged. In each case, for women, Beauvoir's argument seems to be, on Sartrean premises, that the transition is via the lord's permission, initially in wanting woman as 'other' for sustaining his own existence, second because he somehow recognizes that his own self-conscious being will be enhanced by the recognition of woman as other but equal. But it isn't at all clear why on Sartrean premises the latter step, at any rate, should be taken. Beauvoir herself makes woman's bodily situation, her organic being in itself a temptation to embrace immanence and evade transcendence, which, although an option not open to an animal, keeps woman positioned more in relation to species than to individuated existence.

Clear-cut distinctions between existence and being; between different existents and between individual and collective existence are inconsistently sustained within the explanations and accounts of women's subordination and possible liberation given in *The Second Sex*. There is a persistent capacity for confusion about woman's being that is evident in Beauvoir's own thinking of women, not only in terms of their transcendent possibilities but also of their immanence. Woman as 'other to herself', as the slave of the species, is never fully exorcized from the individual who demands to be recognized as an existent. Yet the constitutive dualities of Beauvoir's analysis make it difficult to think this self/other as anything more than a defective subject in which the distinction between existence and being becomes blurred. Moreover, the blurring of the subject/object (existent/being) distinction

is accompanied by the blurring of the self/other distinction in the relation between any individual woman and women as a group. Women identify each other, as well as being identified by men, in terms of common and undifferentiated being rather than unique and individuated existence. I would argue then that the crucial tension in Beauvoir's analysis is that between a conceptual framework which is premised on a radical distinction between subject (existence) and object (being) and a mode of thinking which conceives subject as simultaneously object and vice versa. It is this latter mode of thinking which Sartre identifies as Hegel's most fundamental error and the expression of his epistemological and ontological hubris (Sartre, 1958: 241–4). For this reason, I want to look again and more closely at Hegel's account of what it means to become a subject, discarding the lenses provided by Sartre and Kojève.

3.3 Thinking Being as Life; Existence as Spirit

Hegel's account of sexual difference in nature and society is standardly read as part of the Western tradition's hierarchical binary oppositions discussed in chapter 1. Within this conceptual framework women are associated with nature, men with culture; women with determined and men with self-determining being; women with object and men with subject; and so on. In so far as Beauvoir's analysis draws upon Hegel's account of these dualities in his *Philosophy of Nature* and in the section on self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, feminist critics have argued that Beauvoir necessarily carries over aspects of the androcentrism of Hegel's analysis in which women are associated with the inferior term of each duality. In this section I will argue that this criticism only makes sense if Hegel's account of the relations and distinctions between 'nature' and 'spirit' and between different self-consciousnesses is equated with that of his existentialist interpreters. If we read Hegel differently, then the conceptual tools provided by him for thinking about the question of 'how woman comes to be' are richer and more promising than those of existentialism.

It was noted in the previous chapter that the explicit treatment of women, sex and gender in Hegel's work occurs when he is dealing with points of transition and mediation between nature and spirit. This is true in the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Mind* (*Geist*), in the discussion of Greek ethical life in the *Phenomenology* and of modern ethical life in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. As we have seen, Beauvoir draws explicitly on Hegel's treatment of

male and female in his *Philosophy of Nature* in her account of the ontological challenges to women's existence. For Beauvoir, the importance of the story of the emergence of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* lies in the *absence* of women from the account. However, I want to suggest that it is possible to discern a treatment of the transition from animal to human (spiritual) being at the beginning of Hegel's account of self-consciousness, which offers a phenomenology of the process summed up at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Mind* as the non-natural emergence of spirit from nature (Hegel, 1971: 14). A closer examination of the preliminary discussion of emergent self-consciousness prior to the master/slave dialectic casts a rather different light on the meaning of the story.

In the *Phenomenology* Hegel's purpose is to expound the immanent logic of truth, through a phenomenological exploration of the relation between the subject and object of knowledge. In the first part of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel traces how consciousness comes to realize that in cognition the object of consciousness is not independent of consciousness but is itself consciousness (Hegel, 1977: 102; Pinkard, 1994: 46–9). The realm of truth is therefore the realm of self-consciousness (of consciousness reflecting upon itself) and the task of the philosopher becomes that of comprehending the development of self-consciousness and the different modes of its self-understanding. Hegel begins his account of the development of self-consciousness by exploring the identity and non-identity of spirit (self-conscious being) and nature (organic life) phenomenologically through a reconstruction of the experience of this identity and non-identity. The account begins not with self-consciousness but with life, the organic ongoing reproduction of the human genus, which is a story of the life-cycle of sex, birth, sustenance and death (Hegel, 1977: 106–11).

Self-consciousness is introduced as 'genus on its own account', the simple essence which has itself as pure 'I' for object and which identifies itself as distinct from the ebb and flow of organic life as a whole (Hegel, 1977: 109). What does this mean? Here we find the key to Hegel's claim that spirit emerges non-naturally from nature. The human animal is peculiar, Hegel suggests, because it depends for its survival not simply on implicit, instinctually programmed mechanisms or habits (letting nature take its course) to ensure the survival of the species but on making its survival an explicit object both as species and as individual. In the opening paragraphs of the section on 'Self-Consciousness', Hegel focuses on the ways in which this non-natural nature is manifested from different perspectives within the life-cycle. From the point of view of human progenitors, explicit commitment

to species survival is demonstrated in the need to work on external nature in order to sustain their offspring. From the point of view of the offspring, it survives as an individual only through feeding, and the insatiable desire to consume that which is external to it.

Desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that this supersession can take place, there must be this other. Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object, is unable to supersede it; it is really because of that relation that it produces the object again, and the desire as well. (Hegel, 1977: 109)

If self-consciousness is to survive as an individual or as a species it has to recognize that which is instrumental to its survival not only as external nature ('life'), but also as other self-consciousnesses on which it depends for the possibility of its independence, its own becoming. In other words, it has to learn. Hegel goes on to suggest that this is true from the most elementary level at which an individual child learns to feed itself to the most complex levels of human development. Spirit distinguishes itself from nature as being dependent on the non-natural process of learning, from both nature and other self-consciousnesses, which yet is natural to it.¹¹

In Beauvoir's analysis, following both Sartre and Kojève, the life and death struggle, which Hegel describes following his account of the peculiar nature of self-conscious being holds a particular significance. In Beauvoir's case this is not only because the risking of life is the epitome of a project of transcendence, of what it means to exist as opposed simply to be, but also because it contrasts with the purely biological function of giving birth. I would argue, however, that in Hegel's analysis the process of reproduction provides an equally significant context for the self-conscious development of spirit to that given by the deliberate suffering or infliction of death. The life and death struggle is a fable used by Hegel to demonstrate the inadequacy of any account of self-consciousness as independent either of nature (life) or other self-consciousnesses (Hegel, 1977: 113–15). From the point of view of any given 'I', my death is an ultimate proof of my identity with nature which, frustratingly, I can never learn about through dying; and the death of the other is a deprivation in that it takes away a source of my own self-conscious being and becoming. Hegel emphasizes the point by staging the fable in a world of only two self-conscious existents, itself a less complex world than that of the species life, of progenitors and offspring, with which his analysis

was initially concerned. The participants in the life and death struggle are presented initially as heroic figures, but Hegel is clear that what they seek to prove turns to dust.

This trial by death, however, does away with the truth which was supposed to issue from it, and so, too, with the certainty of self generally. For just as life is the *natural* setting of consciousness, independence without absolute negativity, so death is the *natural* negation of consciousness, negation without independence, which thus remains without the required significance of recognition. (Hegel, 1977: 114)

The fable of the life and death struggle confirms the identity and mutual dependence of spirit with nature and self-consciousness with other self-consciousnesses. In the following passages, Hegel goes further in examining and explaining the nature of this identity and mutual dependence. Within this section nature figures both as organic life, which is the natural, indispensable condition of spirit and has been explicitly recognized as such, and as the substantial object upon which self-consciousness (in the form of the slave) works (Hegel, 1977: 115–19). The position of the slave forces a more sophisticated recognition of the truth already evident to the infant as it is weaned. This is the truth that survival for self-conscious being involves self-transformation from the state of greedy immediate desire to the willingness to defer gratification and put energy into transforming the world into one in which the possibility of living will become more than a question of external contingency (Hegel, 1977: 117–19). ‘The fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom’, because the fear of death (the recognition of natural dependence and mortality) propels the slave into the production of a ‘second nature’, without which, for human beings, there is no life. The position of the master is untenable because in refusing to recognize his dependence on either life or the slave he is incapable of learning, his position is eternally infantilized (Hegel, 1977: 117).

As Hegel moves on into his exploration of different modes of self-consciousness, he traces a constant series of reversals in which modes of identification of self-consciousness with itself and the world turn out to be inadequate and mistaken as accounts of self-consciousness and of knowledge. The argument of the *Phenomenology* takes a second decisive turn when Hegel moves from the paradigm of self-consciousness, in the form of individuated encounters with others and the world, to exploring the realm of ‘spirit’. Although we have already been introduced to spirit as the mutual dependence of

self-consciousnesses: ‘“I” that is “We” and “We” that is “I”’ (1977: 110), throughout the sections on ‘Self-Consciousness’ and ‘Reason’ self-consciousness is presented as abstract and decontextualized. Spirit in the sense of ‘second nature’ is missing from the analysis, although it is presaged in the work of the slave. Without spirit in this objective, social and historical sense, Hegel argues, no sense can be made either ontologically or epistemologically of what it means to be self-conscious being. In other words, the comprehension of subjective spirit cannot be separated from that of objective spirit and vice versa. At this point Hegel moves his analysis onto an explicitly historical stage and starts the discussion of Greek ethical life. It is also at this point that the deep distinction between the existentialist understanding of the dualities framing human existence and the Hegelian picture become particularly obvious. The sense in which spirit is understood as self-changing being in Hegel’s account includes an irreducible natural, collective and institutional dimension. The notion of individual abstraction from this dimension, whether in a Hobbesian or existentialist mode, is a fantasy, expressed both in the life/death struggle fable and in the historical experience of the French revolutionary terror (Hegel, 1977: 355–65). This is not simply because there is no escape from the limitations of external facticity, but because we (meaning any self-conscious being) are the limitations of our external facticity: we are what we learn, what we have learned and also what we do not and have not learned. This is also why particular ‘Is’ and ‘Wes’ are always a product of complex contingencies.

In Beauvoir’s argument in *The Second Sex*, she takes two ideas as providing the key to her analysis: first, the Sartrean view of a radical distinction between existence and being; second, Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, read through Kojévian eyes. She then analyses the position of women in specific historical eras, with reference to these frameworks for thought. In doing this, she produces a new phenomenology of spirit, mapping the possibilities for women at each historical stage. Problems arise for the analysis in so far as neither of these conceptual frameworks is adequate to the task Beauvoir has set herself. This is evident in the way in which Beauvoir’s analysis strains against her conceptual approach both ontologically and normatively. Her own phenomenological insights frequently undercut the distinctions on which she relies. Her insights into the grounds of women’s oppression (in which women figure actually in an ontologically impossible and therefore inconceivable subject/object position) and her utopian goal of ‘mutual recognition’ between men and women are difficult to explain within the terms in which she is arguing. If one takes on the

implications of the strains of Beauvoir's analysis, then what is called for is a way of thinking both the relations between self-consciousness and nature and of thinking intersubjectivity which is not fixed in an ahistorical existentialist mode. This suggests that Beauvoir's analysis may be re-thought both ontologically and epistemologically. In ontological terms, this means working with rather than resisting an understanding of what it means to be/become woman (and man as well) as both subject and object. In terms of epistemology, it means rejecting any transcendental, ahistorical vantage point for the perception of the truth about woman and pursuing phenomenology as a fundamentally open project, rather than an exercise which always already knows what it will find.

Conclusion

The distinctions and relations between existence (subject) and being (object), between self and other, and between individual and collective, which Beauvoir uses to frame her analysis have been central to the feminist reception of her argument in *The Second Sex*. For many feminist critics, these conceptual dualities replicate the hierarchical binaries of the philosophical tradition, reinventing strict demarcations between reason and nature, subject and object, freedom and determination, and locating women within the inferior, denigrated term. The critical engagement with Beauvoir exemplifies the variety of directions, explored in chapter 1, in which feminist philosophy has sought to engage with the question of how to think what it means to be/become a woman. In spite of their differences, what is frequently shared by these interpretations of and responses to Beauvoir is a claim that it is her reliance on the androcentric philosophies of Hegel and Sartre which underpins her interpretation of biological and historical empirical evidence, and the philosophical inadequacies and political weaknesses of her ideas. This claim is sometimes linked to matters of misogynistic attitudes or evaluations which are seen to be carried over into Beauvoir's own work, in particular in relation to her attitude to women's reproductive and domestic work. Often, however, the claim goes much deeper, arguing for the inherent misogyny of the ontology and politics implicit in Hegel's and Sartre's accounts of existence and intersubjective relations.

Rationalist feminisms, though they would reject the language of existentialism, essentially accept something like the existence/being distinction as ontologically foundational. In other words, they accept

a clear split between natural or animal being and human being, and argue against the identification of woman with the former. For this reason, such feminists are unhappy with the ambiguity of Beauvoir's placing of woman in relation to this distinction, which is seen as confirming that women are less capable of freedom than men. Critical feminists have challenged Beauvoir's distinction between productive and reproductive work, and argued that the latter provides a basis for the collective identity and emancipatory potential of women as an oppressed group. For both rationalist and critical feminists, the problem with Beauvoir's analysis is not that she defines human existence in terms of freedom and distinguishes this from purely natural or material being, but that she does this in a way which excludes women from full participation in human existence. For such feminists, Beauvoir is condemned for flirting with essentialism in relation to sexual difference, but celebrated for the inclusive universalism of her view of women's potential as men's equals.

The reverse tendency can be discerned in feminisms which are based on the affirmation of sexual difference. Here Beauvoir is accused of being too quick to identify human existence with a masculinist model of individuated freedom and transcendence. The ontological binaries of existentialism become mapped onto a different sort of binary in which immanence and connection are identified in positive opposition to transcendence and separation. So that identification with 'species' tasks figures not as existence in bad faith, but as a positively evaluated mode of being in the world to be contrasted with the negative, destructive, masculinist mode. Here it is not so much Beauvoir's essentialism as her universalism which comes into question. As might be expected, postmodernist feminist responses to Beauvoir reject both any attempt to fix the meaning of sexual difference and the idea that there could be a secure, universally meaningful account of the truth of women's being and freedom.¹²

I have argued in this chapter that a certain existentialist reading of Hegel is crucial to the ways in which Beauvoir's thinking of the second sex beomes trapped in dualisms which appear to stall the comprehension of what it means to be a woman. I have also suggested, however, that there are elements in Beauvoir's argument which display affinities with a different reading of Hegel and the meaning of his account of the emergence of self-consciousness, and that a more substantial turn to Hegel might have furnished Beauvoir with a rather less fixed and negative view of women's bodily situation together with a rather more robust and optimistic account of the actualities and possibilities of collective existence. In the following chapter, I

will pursue this argument further in relation to the way in which Beauvoir's successors have responded to and used Hegel's version of the tragedy *Antigone* in his account of Greek ethical life. I will then return to the ontological and epistemological challenges for feminism which Beauvoir's thinking highlights, and which I will argue Hegel helps feminist philosophy to meet.

4

Re-thinking the Second Sex

Introduction

This chapter follows directly from the previous one in that it seeks to explore ways in which feminist philosophers have sought to move beyond the terms of Beauvoir's analysis towards ways of understanding what it means to be/become woman that neither identify woman ideally with existent man nor identify her ideally with an essential otherness.¹ Such developments invariably question and refashion the conceptual dualisms on which Beauvoir's analysis rests, although those dualisms, in particular between being (sex, nature, immanence, determination) and existent (gender, culture, transcendence, self-determination) remain crucially important. This re-thinking of the second sex has been marked by two focuses in particular: first, a concern with the meaning of sex and gender; second, by the increasing significance of the question of the coherence of the category 'woman'. The analysis of sex and gender has involved raising questions about how sex and gender are produced or constructed (biologically, psychologically and socially); how sex and gender are related to each other; and how what it means to be sexed and gendered beings might be transformed. The critical engagement with the category 'woman' has been prompted by increased recognition of the profound differences between women, as well as between women and men, and a consequent disillusionment with the idea of using 'woman' as the label for an identifiable collective. The first question keeps the issue of the distinction and relation between determination (that which is naturally given) and self-determination (that which is constructed) in what it means to be/become women at the forefront of feminist analysis. The

second question highlights the issue of the implication of women's identity and difference from each other and from men for authoritative claims about what women are and what they may become. As Beauvoir's analysis demonstrates, it is impossible to separate answers to ontological questions about sex and gender from epistemological questions about the authority with which the feminist philosopher speaks.

In what follows, I will explore three attempts to move beyond Beauvoir which, like Beauvoir, involve an engagement with Hegel's work as part of the project of re-thinking the second sex. This time, however, it is Hegel's recounting of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology* which forms the most significant reference point for feminist philosophical argument (Hegel, 1977: 267–89; Sophocles, 1982). The three arguments to be considered are those of Patricia Mills in 'Hegel's *Antigone*', of Luce Irigaray in *Speculum of the Other Woman* and of Judith Butler in *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (Mills, 1996a; Irigaray, 1985; Butler, 2000).² I select these three thinkers because in illustrating alternative trajectories of feminist philosophy they also, like Beauvoir, raise interesting questions for the relation between feminist and Hegelian philosophies. In each case an encounter with Hegel's *Antigone* is significant in the elucidation of a post-Beauvoirian feminist philosophy. Mills argues for an approach to questions of sexual difference mediated through critical theory, in particular through Adorno's negative dialectics (critical feminism); Irigaray argues for a positive conception of woman as other, outside of the oppositional terms inscribed, she argues, by both Hegel and Lacan (sexual difference feminism); and Butler puts forward a postmodernist argument (again formulated *contra* Hegel and Lacan) favouring performative against ontological understandings of sex and gender (postmodernist feminism).

In the first section, after a brief exposition of Hegel's version of *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology*, I will move on to give an account of the three feminist interpretations. I will examine the ways in which they use their own interpretation of *Antigone* against Hegel, and I will explore the implications of this for the feminist interpreters' post-Beauvoirian responses to the question of what it means to be/become woman. As with Beauvoir, I will suggest that the ghost of Hegel continues to operate interestingly as both resource and irritant in the options for feminist philosophy represented by Mills, Irigaray and Butler. In the second section, I will offer an alternative reading of Hegel's account of the story of *Antigone* and re-examine the three feminist interpretations in the light of it. In the third section, following

on from the analysis in the previous chapter as well as this one, I will flesh out a Hegelian feminist response to the questions of the meaning of sex and gender and the authority of the feminist philosopher's discourse, which are posed and explored by Beauvoir, Mills, Irigaray and Butler. I will argue that this Hegelian route presents a way forward for feminist thinking, which moves beyond the 'way of despair' more effectively than the critical, sexual difference and postmodernist pathways represented by Mills, Irigaray and Butler. However, this Hegelian pathway does have significant implications for the projects of feminist ethics and politics, which I will move on to explore in the following chapters.

4.1 Antigone's Story

It was noted in the previous chapter that in the *Phenomenology* Hegel moves from examining subjective spirit in the chapters on self-consciousness and reason, to examining the realm of objective spirit, in order to give an adequate account of the meaning of spirit as self-determination. Hegel's discussion of *Antigone* arises in the context of his account of spirit in the form of the ethical life of the Greek world, an account which uses the plays of Sophocles to articulate both the nature of this form of spirit and its dissolution (Hegel, 1977: 266–89).³ According to Hegel, we are in the realm of spirit here because the Greek world is consciously self-determining, sustaining itself over and against purely natural determination. However, this form of spirit is characterized by an ethical life which is 'immediate'. That is to say that the ways in which this form of spirit understands itself involve locating the power of its self-determination in deeper, more original powers. In other words, the self-determination of spirit is not understood self-consciously. The power to which ethical life is attributed in this context is that of either divine or human law. Hegel associates the former power with the realm of the *Penates*, the household gods, but also with the underworld, the realm of death and natural contingency. The divine law requires above all that death should be rendered ethical through the proper ceremony and ritual of burial, in which the immortality of the family (kinship) is achieved over and against the destructive power of nature. Human law, by contrast, is associated with the power of the city, the self-legislating collective which, like the family, is preserved over and against (and crucially is also sustained by) the death of its members, most particularly in war (Hegel, 1977: 267–76). According to Hegel, each of these laws is

sustained by the other, but nevertheless they are experienced as distinct realms of obligation which, he argues, are linked to a division of labour between women and men. The obligations of divine law are upheld by women in their roles as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters;⁴ the obligations of human law are upheld by citizens, who are men (Hegel, 1977: 274–5). In both cases, however, these obligations are understood as requirements which are absolute as well as complementary. Tragedy traces what happens when the two realms cease to be complementary and divine and human law come into conflict. Hegel understands all of Greek tragedy in these terms, but always stresses the way in which Sophocles' *Antigone* represents the most perfect example (Hegel, 1975: 1217–18). There is no reconciliation in *Antigone*, only an unbridgeable gap and irresolvable opposition which opens up between divine and human law, thereby bringing about the destruction of both (Hegel, 1977: 279–87).

In his discussion of the character of *Antigone*, Hegel emphasizes the purity of the ethical relation between brother and sister, one which is uncorrupted by the natural contingency of desire and which makes *Antigone's* duty to bury her brother absolute (Hegel, 1977: 274). As a thoroughly ethical consciousness, *Antigone* can only follow the requirements of her ethical life and is unable or unwilling to recognize the human law as ethical. At the same time, Hegel points to Creon's consciousness as ethical in the same sense as *Antigone's*, in that it is equally unreflective in its inability or unwillingness to recognize *Antigone's* act as ethical in itself.

The ethical consciousness is, *qua* self-consciousness, in this opposition and as such it at once proceeds to force into subjection to the law which it accepts, the reality which is opposed to it, or else to outwit it. Since it sees right only on one side and wrong on the other, that consciousness which belongs to the divine law sees in the other side only the violence of human caprice, while that which holds to human law sees in the other only the self-will and disobedience of the individual who insists on being his own authority. (Hegel, 1977: 280)

The confrontation between the two ethical consciousnesses, however, shifts into something different when the ethical consciousness acts and, in acting, disrupts the ethical understanding of divine and human law as absolute, mutually indifferent standpoints. In their deeds both *Antigone* and Creon discover that divine and human law are mutually dependent and that, in contravening the one through supposedly upholding the other, they unleash powers of destruction

which, according to Hegel, have to be understood in ethical terms of guilt and punishment.⁵ In a reference to the earlier story of Antigone's father/brother (Oedipus), Hegel argues that this guilt is all the more the case in the story of *Antigone*, as here both laws are broken knowingly (Hegel, 1977: 283–4). Unlike Oedipus, who killed his father and married his mother in ignorance, both Antigone and Creon know what they are doing even though they do not grasp the significance of their actions. However, in carrying out their actions, their understanding is altered. The understanding of divine and human law as ethically immediate turns out to be a false understanding. The consequence of both Antigone's and Creon's actions is that the equilibrium between the two ethical powers and their mutually sustaining means of spiritualizing natural contingency are destroyed. The Greek world collapses into warring which is not underpinned by loyalty either to city or kin (ethical consciousness), but is a matter simply of the strength and luck (natural contingency) of individuals. Eventually, the realm of the polis, underpinned by the practices of Greek ethical life, gives way to empire (Hegel, 1977: 290).

As with all of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's account of Greek ethical life and the place of *Antigone* within it is open to multiple interpretations and criticisms.⁶ Its importance for feminist readers lies, as already noted, in the fact that it is one of the two extended discussions Hegel has throughout his work about the relation of the two sexes within ethical life (the other is in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*) and, at various points, but particularly in Paragraph 475 (Hegel, 1977: 287–8), he seems to be discussing women at a level of generality which has significance beyond the specific context of Greek tragedy. This is borne out by the fact that in the much later work, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel refers back to the figure of Antigone to underpin claims about the place of women in the modern state (Hegel, 1991: 206). Mills's interpretation of Hegel's treatment of *Antigone* sees it as part of the story of human development, detailed in the *Phenomenology*, as the progressive mastery of spirit over nature and of universal over particular. This is a story, according to Mills, which is driven by a dialectical logic which depends on the dynamic opposition and resolution of relations between particular self-conscious being and the universality of spirit, in the form of legal, social and political life. The mark of the pagan realm of Greek ethical life is that it is incapable of furthering spirit's development in its (Greek ethical life's) own terms, because within it the relations between particular and universal become frozen in a split between family (first nature) and polis (second nature). Mills's specific interest is in showing

how Hegel's comments on *Antigone* reveal how women are positioned within Hegel's overarching story. According to Mills, Hegel's treatment of *Antigone* (both play and character) demonstrates that he presumes the exclusion of women from the story of the development of spirit. This is claimed to be evident in the way in which women's particular existence is presented by Hegel as natural rather than spiritual, and therefore as incapable of laying a claim to recognition within either the realm of divine or human law.⁷ In being denied particular self-conscious existence, women are denied the possibility of participating in history and their confinement to the quasi-natural sphere of the family is legitimated.

According to Mills, however, Hegel is able to maintain his exclusion of women from the story of spirit only through a wilful misreading of certain crucial elements of the *Antigone*. If the story of *Antigone* is properly understood, Mills argues, then it has a very different significance for woman's role and, rather than excluding woman from the story of spirit, enrolls woman's otherness/difference within the realm of the human community. Moreover, in doing this, it permits an understanding of dialectics which does not always culminate in the domination of universal over particular.

Humanity is both male and female and the claim to encompass the universality of human experience must allow for woman's experience and participation outside of the sphere of the family; it must allow for a more comprehensive account of the *Antigone* than Hegel can provide. (Mills, 1996a: 84)

Mills argues that there are four respects in which Hegel misreads (or reads partially) *Antigone*. First, Hegel ignores the relation between Antigone and her sister Ismene; second, Hegel ignores the extent to which Antigone is a self-conscious actor; third, Hegel ignores the fact that Antigone transcends her woman's place by acting in the political sphere; fourth, Hegel does not discuss Antigone's suicide (Mills, 1996a: 75–7). In each of these cases, Mills sees Hegel as sidelining points in the play at which the neat division of spheres and duties does not apply. Antigone and Ismene are both women and sisters, but they are not the same in their relation to what Hegel has identified as the ethical life proper to them as women. Ismene's instinctive loyalty is not to divine but to human law, and during the course of the play it is her feeling for her sister, not for her dead brother, which moves her to the contemplation of self-sacrifice (Mills, 1996a: 71–2). Mills argues that it is clear from the play that Antigone is by no means subsumed

within an ethical consciousness which she is incapable of questioning. Instead she acts self-consciously in the mode of an individual within the public sphere in Hegel's terms. Moreover, Antigone's move into the limelight of the polis to confront Creon after her attempt to bury the body in secret removes her from the sphere of the family. She accomplishes what Hegel's categorization presumes to be impossible for women, the transition from first into second nature. Finally, Antigone's suicide, which Hegel does not mention, should be understood as an ethical act of rebellion that asserts her own self-conscious particularity against Creon's tyranny. This is something which fits uncomfortably with Hegel's stress on the unreflective and inevitable clash between human and divine law. Mills is particularly insistent that Hegel misrepresents the argument of the play in suggesting that Antigone and Creon share and acknowledge equal guilt. Instead, she argues that Hegel forces the opposition between Antigone and Creon into a pattern which is contrary to the actual message of the play, which endorses Creon's guilt but not Antigone's (Mills, 1987: 24).

Antigone rebels against Creon's claim to the right of the universal *over* the particular; in so doing she refuses to fit neatly into the Hegelian enterprise in which universality ultimately dominates. In criticizing Hegel's interpretation of the *Antigone* we begin to see another story in Western philosophy, one other than that of Hegelian reconciliation – the revolt of the particular against subsumption under a universal schema. (Mills, 1996a: 77)

For Mills, her anti-Hegelian reading of *Antigone* can be used to subvert the notion that woman should be understood in terms of naturally determined confinement to a private sphere of immanence. This is part of a more general project to re-think the development of spirit (of history and civilization) in a way which includes, but is not reducible to, women's point of view (Mills, 1987: xi–xx). Mills's critical dialectical feminism sees itself as moving beyond Beauvoir's answer to the question of what it means to be/become woman by offering a rather different version of a feminist phenomenology of spirit. This entails getting beyond both the fixed dualisms of Beauvoir's approach and her endorsement of Hegel's privileging of the categories of universality and identity (masculinist values) over categories of particularity and difference in his dialectical schema. On Mills's account, for Beauvoir, women can only aspire to *imitate* men because they have not entered into their own struggle for recognition (Mills, 1987: 11). At the same time as criticizing Beauvoir for taking too much from Hegel, however, Mills also criticizes both Hegel and Beauvoir

for not being Hegelian enough. Mills's critical theory approach relies on features drawn from her account of Hegelian thinking which, she argues, Hegel himself fails to live up to because he excludes women from the category of spirit and, in doing so, closes off his dialectic into a triumphalist account of the victory of universal over particular, identity over difference. In expelling women from history, according to Mills, Hegel also expels that which cannot be entirely grasped by the concept (i.e., nature, the realm with which women are identified), but for Mills, following Adorno, it is only recognition of the impossibility of wholly grasping nature which keeps the dialectic open (Mills, 1987: xvi–xix). As a result of this move, Mills argues, Hegel's theory of history is inevitably inadequate because it privileges male experience, while invoking woman as the representative of non-identity or absolute otherness.

In contrast to Hegel's identification of woman purely with nature, Mills argues for an account of what it means to be/become woman which includes women in the dialectical relation between particular and universal which, she argues, is precipitated by the encounter of spirit with nature as its other and the desire to overcome that difference. This is the desire which, in the story of the struggle for recognition, leads to the creation of second nature, the realm of mutual recognition. What it means to be/become woman involves the same dialectic of desire and recognition as marks the experience of men. It is an open-ended dynamic process which works through the historical development of both particular individual self-consciousnesses and forms of collective spirit. But this dialectic in the case of women has been occluded by the persistent identification of women's being/becoming with the absolute otherness of nature, and therefore needs to be recuperated into the story of spirit's progress (Mills, 1987: xiii).

Mills argues for a reworking of the phenomenology of spirit in which women's difference from, rather than their similarity to, men needs to be emphasized. This is because women's becoming, their encounters with and distinction from the otherness of nature, their struggles for recognition and self-determination have not been chronicled. Nevertheless, what emerges from Mills's account of *Antigone* is not a story which demonstrates or celebrates women's becoming as necessarily radically different from that of men in terms of the process or the potential outcome. Like Beauvoir, Mills confirms women's freedom as the transcendence of sex understood as natural, given determination. Like Beauvoir also, Mills presumes the plausibility of treating woman as an intelligible category which makes sense of the experience of women, unified through philosophical and historical

occlusion and exclusion. Again she remains close to Beauvoir, in that the key to women's freedom is to escape from immersion in nature and to challenge patriarchal attempts to prevent that escape. The explanation of women's oppression is not any essential difference or disability, but the use of notions of difference and disability to block women's opportunities to participate in history. The main difference between Mills and Beauvoir is that she is better able to explain how it is that women have not been able to flourish as existents in Beauvoir's terms. Utilizing critical theory and its arguments for the socio-historical determination of the psyche, Mills can account for the way in which both men and women may accept distorted accounts of women's potential and why transcendence is difficult in a patriarchal and capitalist world. At the same time, the story of the character Antigone, for Mills, exemplifies how it is possible for women to transcend the ways in which thinkers like Hegel define them and demand recognition of their particularity in order to change history.

Irigaray's reading of Hegel on *Antigone*, while it shares Mills's conviction as to the significance of Hegel's account for his masculinist understanding of sexual difference, draws rather different lessons for feminists. For Irigaray, Hegel's account of *Antigone* can be seen as telling the story of woman as the source/substance which nourishes and sustains the construction of human community, yet which cannot be fully recouped into this community (Irigaray, 1985: 214–26). According to Irigaray, Hegel tells this story as the triumph of human law and masculine authority, but recognizes the fact that in some sense woman escapes full submission to that authority and therefore exists as the 'eternal irony' in the life of the community, the other which is not entirely reducible to the same. Although Irigaray accepts Hegel's account of the ethical nature of the realm of divine law, her reading relies on pointing out those aspects of Hegel's language use which suggest that the contrast between divine and human law should be understood in terms of the contrast between natural (unconscious) and spiritual (conscious) being. The divine law, rooted in the 'netherworld' of earth and blood, enables (by providing the material or element for determination) the transformation of nature into spirit and contingent existence into ethical existence, but at the same time remains tied to the non-spiritual, elemental world. Human law, meanwhile, is the realm of the self-conscious determination and transformation of material nature to fuel the spiritual reproduction of the community and its members. Irigaray is clear that this story is one full of ironies and inversions and reads it doubly, first as confirming the masculinist worldview of the overcoming of other (woman) by

self (man) and the consequent denial of a fully fledged role for woman within spirit; second, as the acknowledgement of the excluded, transformative power of woman which continues to unsettle and challenge the dominant masculinist order.

But, as long as the sister goes on in her living unity she can be the self-representative basis of that substance – the blood – that the brother assimilates in order to return to the self. She can guarantee that the son develops for himself (*pour soi*), independently of the couple that made him: she is *the living mirror*, the source reflecting the growing autonomy of the self-same. (Irigaray, 1985: 221)

As is evident in the quotation above, Irigaray's reading of Hegel on *Antigone* is bound up with her reading of Lacan. The positioning of woman as not fully recuperable into masculinist order both draws on Lacan's psychoanalytic account of female desire and the feminine and also sets itself against Lacan's negative, passive characterization of female desire (Grosz, 1990: 131–40; Butler, 1999: 202–3).⁸ Irigaray also counters Lacan's interpretation of the *Antigone* story which, in contrast to Hegel, denies the idea that Antigone and Creon represent opposing laws or forces (Butler, 2000: 45–55). For Irigaray, Lacan goes much further than Hegel in erasing woman from the interpretation of *Antigone* by reading her act as death-driven, self-sacrifice which even while it is intelligible within the symbolic order gestures towards an unrepresentable otherness (Irigaray, 1985: 224–5). The masculine Hegelian story then is one in which the production of self-conscious selves requires the using up and incorporation of otherness, the domination of natural elements, of life by law. However, the irony is that law draws its strength from that which it dominates – and this is the clue to a different understanding of being which may be set against the predominant story. Hegel's suggestion of this subversive possibility is cancelled out on Irigaray's account by his masculinist acceptance of the necessity of the victory of human over divine law. In her own work, however, this possibility is central to the articulation of a notion of a feminine subject position which cannot be subsumed under the masculine norm.

In contrast to Mills, Irigaray draws on the figure of Antigone to re-think the second sex, not as figuring woman's right to inclusion within the dialectical play of history along with men, but as a way of articulating what it means to be/become woman in clear distinction to masculine accounts of what it means to be a subject. As Schor notes, with due recognition of the differences between the kind of 'subject'

signified by the two thinkers' use of the term, this also distances Irigaray from Beauvoir.⁹ In their different ways, both Beauvoir and Mills respond to the question of what it means to be/become woman with the accent on a process of becoming which is common to both men and women, even if the outcomes may affirm sexual (i.e., gender) difference. Irigaray challenges both Beauvoir's and Mills's conception of the second sex by according sexual difference a prior role in accordance with her feminist appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Following from the latter, the desire to affirm a common process of becoming for men and women is itself read as an effect of the primary prohibition of desire for the female, which constitutes the patriarchal symbolic order and makes woman the other to man. All that is left for women within this symbolic order is to copy, mirror and mime male desire. Thus, for Irigaray, the goal of the participation of woman in existential transcendence or in the working through of an historical dialectic attests to the reduction of woman to the other of man, a masculinist construction of sex and gender both. 'Irigaray's project is diametrically opposed to Beauvoir's but must be viewed as its necessary corollary. Just as Beauvoir lays bare the mechanisms of othering, Irigaray exposes those of what we might call, by analogy, "saming"' (Schor, 1994: 65). Irigaray's argument in relation to Hegel's (and Lacan's) *Antigone* pushes feminist philosophy in a direction which appears decisively different to that taken by Mills or by Beauvoir. In Schor's terms, Beauvoir and Mills associate patriarchy with the 'othering' of women, whereas Irigaray associates patriarchy with the 'saming' of women. The feminist response to patriarchy differs accordingly, so that Beauvoir and Mills argue for the inclusion of women in the category of 'existents' or 'humanity' from which they have been excluded, whereas Irigaray argues that women be thought differently, that is, in terms other than those permitted by the patriarchal symbolic order. Both sorts of argument are concerned with the conditions of possibility of women's becoming, but in Irigaray's case the vocabulary is neither that of existentialism nor critical theory but of structuralist psychoanalysis. This makes the project of identifying what it means to be/become woman in ways which enable any kind of challenge to patriarchy very difficult, since it is no longer the identification of woman with either immanence or transcendence which is at stake but this very opposition.

Irigaray's attempts to think or present an alternative understanding of the second sex, as exemplified in the reading of Hegel above, involve two strategies. The first is to enter into the language of patriarchal philosophy and through 'mimesis' highlight the limits and

exclusions which enable the identification of woman as man's other. Irigaray's reading of Hegel's *Antigone* points to the way in which she (Antigone) confirms the patriarchal order. As such, Antigone operates as the constitutive other, caught herself within the limits which she points beyond. Irigaray's second strategy pursues the trace of radical alterity, the other which cannot be caught within the exchange economy of the symbolic order. In order to do this, she utilizes the vocabulary of fluidity and mess, holes and slime, with which thinkers such as Sartre and Beauvoir have signified women's sex, the realm of immanence, or pure natural determination. But Irigaray uses this vocabulary to indicate positive possibilities rather than negation and lack. For Irigaray, sexual difference marks, or at least points towards, an incommensurability between two modes of being/becoming: woman gives and man owes, but the vocabulary and economy of gift is radically other to the vocabulary and economy of exchange.¹⁰

In *Antigone's Claim*, Butler, like Irigaray, situates her analysis in relation to both Hegel's and Lacan's readings of the *Antigone*. In many ways, her account of Hegel's reading echoes those of Mills and Irigaray, with the emphasis being on Hegel's insistence on the absolute otherness and yet mutual dependence of kinship (divine law) and political sovereignty (human law), and the implications of this for the positioning of 'womankind'. For Butler, Hegel's version of the story is one in which an initial assertion of the equal validity of the two spheres, in relation to which Antigone emerges as a heroic particular ethical consciousness, is transmuted into the story of the generalized, unethical subversiveness of women, which is necessary to but cannot be part of the political order. As with Mills, Butler points out that Antigone never acknowledges guilt and that, moreover, there is an asymmetry between the mutually dependent laws of the gods and of the polis which undercuts Hegel's assertion of their equality (Butler, 2000: 32–3). Butler argues that Hegel is only able to 'deal' with the character Antigone by brushing her out of the picture as a particular consciousness, since she refuses to conform to the pattern he wishes to impose, in accordance with his identification with the power of human law. For Butler, it is significant that Antigone's name is effaced within Hegel's discussion and that the special position of Antigone as the sister of Polyneices shifts into an account of women as lovers and mothers of young men, and then again into an account of the state's investment in and sacrifice of young men in war (Butler, 2000: 35–7). Butler suggests that Hegel ends up effacing women and their divine law altogether in his version of the disintegration of Greek ethical life, as if he winds the clock back to the war between Antigone's

brothers and their deaths as what really matters in the education of spirit (an echo of Irigaray's critique of Lacan). However, at the same time as reading Hegel as excluding and effacing Antigone, Butler constantly draws attention to the impossibilities and ambiguities glossed over in Hegel's account. In particular, how is it possible for Antigone both to embody and disrupt the absolute distinction between the two realms of law?

He [Hegel] does not, for instance, account for how it is that she *does* appear, through what misappropriation of public discourse her act becomes recognized as a public act. Does the unwritten law have the power to rewrite public law; is it the not yet written, or is it the never to be written that constitutes an invariable incommensurability between the two spheres? (Butler, 2000: 39)

For Butler, Hegel's reading of *Antigone* is unable to account for what it claims, that is, the ultimate affirmation of the realm of human law as the locus of action and change in contradistinction to the 'eternal', ahistorical realm of divine law. Hegel, Butler suggests, consistently misses out on ambiguities which pervert and render unsustainable this cosy dualism and the integrity or purity of its incommensurable components. In a note to the text she remarks 'My view is that there is no uncontaminated voice with which Antigone speaks' (Butler, 2000: 88). In opposition to Hegel she points out the ways in which Antigone both embodies and impersonates a range of roles and identities. She is simultaneously sister and aunt to Polyneices, sister and daughter to Oedipus, she speaks as a man and unmans her uncle and great-uncle Creon, her cousin and betrothed Haemon (Butler, 2000: 8–9). Her deeds trespass on the norms of both kinship and gender, actualizing the ongoing fate of this particular, peculiar family.

Butler's reading of *Antigone*, in its opposition to Hegel and in contradistinction to Irigaray, shares ground with that of Lacan.¹¹ Like Lacan, Butler rejects the idea that divine and human law represent equal and opposing forces. For Lacan, as noted above, Antigone's invocation of the laws of the gods is a reaching beyond the limits of possibility and liveability established by the symbolic order. Butler accepts this idea but interprets it dynamically as an intervention in and perversion of that order, rather than as its confirmation through the acknowledgement of a permanent constitutive exclusion. In Butler's view, Lacan's mistake is that of generalizing and idealizing kinship as a fixed symbolic order. This means that, like Hegel, Lacan is unable to grasp the impossibilities inherent in what Antigone says and does.

If, as Lacan claims, *Antigone* represents a kind of thinking that counters the symbolic and, hence, counters life, perhaps it is because the very terms of liveability are established by a symbolic that is challenged by her kind of claim. And this claim does not take place outside the symbolic or, indeed, outside the public sphere, but within its terms and as an unanticipated appropriation and perversion of its own mandate. (Butler, 2000: 53–4)

In opposition to both Hegel and Lacan, Butler reads *Antigone* and *Antigone* as representing the scandalous performative disruption and perversion of the symbolic and the social order (kinship and political sovereignty) in her identity, her speech and her action. In this sense, Butler's reading of *Antigone*, unlike those of Mills and Irigaray, does not draw implications for questions of sexual difference alone but for how the domain of 'liveability' in general is both constitutive and exclusive and how, when 'the less than human speaks as human', that domain may be transformed from within (Butler, 2000: 82).

Butler's answer to the question of what it means to be/become woman claims to move beyond sex/gender distinctions and the notion of woman's identity as either the same as or different from man's. To the extent that Beauvoir, Mills and Irigaray continue to orient their responses to this question by reference to distinctions between being and existence, nature and spirit, matter and form, Butler argues that they remain caught in a closed logic of identity and exclusion. This follows as much from the identification of the 'other' as feminine (Irigaray) as it does from the denial of woman as other (Beauvoir, Mills), since in either case what is involved is a closing down of what sex and gender can mean, or rather what performances of sex and gender can be intelligible. Where Irigaray in her mimetic strategy returns to materiality, to bodily fluids to figure the alternative, unspeakable becoming woman, Butler sees this as a dangerous move back to essentialism, which works to confirm rather than to disrupt the Hegelian and Lacanian stories of sex and gender (Butler, 1993; 1994). These are stories which in Butler's view are patriarchal, not simply because of how woman/women are positioned within them but because of the way that they fix an essentialized, idealized notion of kinship and gender. In Hegel's case this is accomplished by linking kinship to first nature, in Lacan's case through the non-natural presupposition of language, the law of the father which inaugurates the economy of prohibited and permitted desire in the incest taboo.

At stake between Butler's and Irigaray's feminisms is the question of how to capture and put to work a notion of radical alterity. That

is to say an 'otherness' which is not a constitutive otherness, not recuperable into either dialectical progress or the patriarchal symbolic order (Butler, 2000: 30). For Butler, Irigaray makes the mistake of attempting to sketch out this radical otherness in terms of an ethics of sexual difference, in which woman is other in a sense which is not the same as other-to-man. Butler claims that this returns Irigaray in spite of herself to the dualisms which continue to sustain patriarchy, because to attempt to capture radical alterity in any particular identity or ethic is always to legislate a particular pattern of inclusion and exclusion, norm and perversion (Butler, 1993; 1994). Butler, as is suggested by the quotation above, finds radical alterity, in contrast to Irigaray, in the possibility of challenge from within the play between social and symbolic orders. Her radicalized Lacanianism identifies sex and gender not with any stable content or capacities and not with women or men, but with constantly reiterated performances, which can challenge as well as conform to the normal conditions of intelligible sexed or gendered speech or action. Antigone exemplifies such performances in her many contaminated voices, working to pervert the course of justice.

4.2 Hegel's *Antigone*

Mills's, Irigaray's and Butler's critical interrogations of Hegel's reading of *Antigone* all affirm certain features of Hegel's argument. First, it is clear within all three readings that what confirms the patriarchal character of Hegel's interpretation is the way in which Antigone's position is mapped onto a fixed distinction between divine and human law, and the identification of the former with the realm of nature and the private sphere and the latter with the realm of spirit and the public sphere. Second, all three feminist critics read Hegel as affirming the victory of spirit and the public sphere over nature and the private sphere, thereby relegating woman and the family to a place outside of history (a reading confirmed by Hegel's later invocation of the character Antigone in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*). Third, all three read Hegel as either wilfully or unwittingly misreading *Antigone* in order to fit its themes into the logic of the story he wishes to tell. The *leitmotif* of all three readings, made most explicitly evident by Mills, is to frame Hegel's treatment of *Antigone* as a chapter in the story of the development of spirit in which woman/women figure as a necessary condition for, but also as excluded by, the struggle for recognition. Like nature, women are raw material,

the source and object of self-conscious activity. Key metaphors and similes used by these commentators to convey the relation between divine and human law are those of *battle*, of victory or defeat following from struggle, or alternatively of art or *work* in which the subject shapes and reshapes its object and thereby abolishes its (the object's) independence. Thus, human law conquers divine law and the community (man/spirit) makes its material being (woman/nature) into its own creation.

At the same time, however, all three critiques of Hegel's reading are clearly immanent critiques. They point to ways in which Hegel misses the implications of his own account, or else to tensions and ambiguities internal to that account which are left unaccounted for within Hegel's text. Prominent among these 'internal' issues are: the question of how divine law is both ethical and natural; the question of how divine and human law can be both incommensurable and mutually sustaining; the question of how divine and human law can be given equal weight, while the victory of the latter over the former is affirmed; the question of how Hegel can overlook Antigone's transgression of the limits he has set up between private and public spheres; and the question of how Antigone, who is *not* a mother or wife, comes to be associated with woman in these roles as the 'eternal irony' of the community. These questions, which open up within Hegel's argument, clearly disturb the story the feminist commentators see him as telling and are also crucial to the ways in which each of them continues to draw on aspects of Hegel's thinking, even as they present their alternative Antigones. In what follows I present an interpretation of Hegel's *Antigone*, which proposes that the 'blind spots' which have been identified in his argument have a rather different significance than the feminist critics suggest. Although this does not necessarily resolve the questions articulated above, it does cast doubt on the characterization of Hegel's argument outlined in the previous paragraph and help to explain why Mills's, Irigaray's and Butler's post-Beauvoirian feminisms find it difficult to leave Hegel entirely behind.¹²

The feminist critiques of Hegel focus on the absolute gap he opens up between divine and human law. Although Hegel insists that both of these laws and the spheres with which they are associated are ethical, the realm of divine law is nevertheless presented as quasi-natural. Woman's sphere remains close to the elements of earth and water, defined by blood and death rather than conscious action or choice. This interpretation seems confirmed by Hegel's association of divine law with kinship and family, ethical relations which are

unchosen, given rather than constructed, unlike the relation between fellow citizens. This interpretation also fits well with contemporary experience of the family as the private sphere of natural ties and affections, in strong contrast to the public sphere of civil society and the state, and makes sense of Hegel's references to the figure of Antigone in his later discussions of modern ethical life in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, 1991: 206). However, if one returns to the context of Hegel's discussion in the *Phenomenology*, the nature of Greek ethical life in the tragedies of the houses of Oedipus and Agamemnon, a different possibility for the understanding of the contrast between divine and human law presents itself. Harris argues that divine law should be understood as referring not to the particularity of the household as such but to the ethical identity of its members with the broader Greek community beyond the confines of the specific polis. The requirements of divine law are the requirements of respect for the individual as Greek, regardless of that individual's particular identity as a citizen or member of a tribe. In turn, human law should be understood as the law of the city, which generates its own requirements of obedience over and above the general identity of a given individual as Greek (as opposed to barbarian). This interpretation of human and divine law calls for a reconsideration both of their nature and relation *and* of the shortcomings of the immediacy of the ethical consciousness on which they rely (Harris, 1997b: 168).

Irigaray points out that Creon's kingship, his claim to the government of the city, is bound up with his membership of the Theban royal family; indeed, it relies on the fact that he is the closest male kin of the dead brothers (the deaths of his nephews are dictated by a strict view of the laws of inheritance according to blood and seniority of birth). She suggests, quite rightly, that this subverts the claims of human law to in some sense transcend the realm of divine law and kinship. Rather than the citizen being released by the family into a world of self-determination, the world of the public sphere remains constrained and determined by ties of blood. According to Irigaray, this is something which Hegel ignores or marginalizes in his effort to understand the *Antigone* in terms which confirm the onward march of spirit. However, there is no reason to read Hegel as if he were unaware of the irony of Creon's simultaneous dismissal of and dependence on the claims of kinship. Rather, Hegel presents Creon's treatment of human law as entirely self-legitimizing, without regard to its dependence on and entwinement with the ties of blood, as being at the heart of his crime. If we follow Harris's interpretation, the spiritualization of natural connection is just as much the mark of

human as of divine law – more specifically so since the realm of the city depends on inherited right. When this is ignored, vengeance takes the form of the destruction of Creon's nearest and dearest – his wife and his son, as well as his niece.

If we see Antigone's action in the context suggested by Harris, it is a fundamentally non-natural act, based on duties prescribed by the gods of Greece as opposed to the law of the city, but essentially concerned with the spiritualization of the material process of her brother's decay. Antigone's crime, like Creon's, is not that she contravenes human law as such but that in doing so she fails to recognize the dependence of divine on human law – the identity of Polyneices as Greek depends on his identity as Theban, neither identity makes sense without the other and in both identities nature and spirit are enmeshed (contaminate one another). All this suggests that divine and human law are much more similar in their nature and compatible in their practice than the readings given of them by Creon and Antigone (and subsequently by commentators on Hegel's *Antigone*) suggest. Creon and Antigone get things wrong, something which becomes apparent as their self-understandings of their action shift in the light of their deeds. That which was understood to be fundamentally ethical, that is, obedience to requirements grounded in a realm beyond self-consciousness (the realm of the same gods in the different forms of the *Penates* and the gods of the city) is revealed to be inadequately ethical. This inadequacy precisely resides in Creon's and Antigone's inability or unwillingness to recognize the limitations of their particular ethical stance. These are limitations which are not to be understood simply as external – human limited by divine, divine by human – but as internal to the stance in question. Neither Creon nor Antigone recognizes the implication of both nature and spirit, determination and self-determination within divine and human law. They each see themselves as having absolutized spirit within their particular realm when actually they have opened up both of those realms to the domination of natural contingency, the strength and luck of the barbarian. In the realm of Greek ethical life, on Hegel's account, spiritualization is understood and experienced in terms of naturalization, the immediate and unreflective identification with life (nation/city) as the overcoming of death. Thus spirit becomes reduced to genus, the natural kind which exists over, above and through the death of its individual members. In contrast, I would argue that Hegel is making the point that the spiritualization of natural contingency has to be understood in non-natural terms, terms which recognize dependency, limitation and determination as an inevitable aspect of

the self-determination of spirit. The sacrifice of young men in war does not affirm the supernatural triumph of the polis, but heralds its disintegration.

On the basis of the above interpretation of the significance of Hegel's *Antigone*, various responses to the questions raised by Hegel's feminist critics can be suggested. *How can divine law be both ethical and natural?* This only arises as a problem if the two realms of spirit and nature are defined as mutually exclusive to begin with. I argued in the previous chapter that this is not actually a claim that Hegel makes in his account of the emergence of spirit from within natural existence. Instead, I claimed that Hegel's notion of spirit entails the self-conscious recognition of its own inseparability from nature, an acknowledgement of dependence which is foreign to plant and animal life. This argument is confirmed in the discussion of nature and spirit in Greek ethical life, which points always to the mutually self-determining relation of organic and spiritual existence. *How can the realms of divine and human law be self-identical and incommensurable but also mutually sustaining?* According to the above reading, the closure and separation of divine from human law is the mistake made in Antigone's and Creon's ethical self-consciousness – in other words it is an inadequate self-understanding, one which is demonstrated to be inadequate in the actualized fate of those ethical self-consciousnesses and in the hubris of other tragic figures.¹³

How can human and divine law be equal and opposite, when Hegel clearly sees the former as triumphing over the latter? Hegel is insistent in his discussion of *Antigone* that both Antigone and Creon are equally guilty in bringing about the destruction of the realms which both represent. His focus on the equality of guilt, which, as the feminist critics and others have pointed out, is not fully borne out by the text of the play, is one of the aspects of his reading which has been seen as most wilfully perverse. However, it makes sense in terms of a reading in which divine and human law are not radically different, but rather common mechanisms for dealing with the interrelation of necessity and contingency in human existence. It also makes sense in terms of a reading of Antigone and Creon as the ones being wilfully perverse in refusing to acknowledge what is shared across the private and the public sphere (kinship and city). The equality and opposition of divine and human law is what is enacted by Antigone and Creon; what lies behind it is a common reality which is shattered by insistence on division. *How can Hegel overlook the ways in which Antigone transgresses the boundaries within which he has confined her?* If Hegel is not presuming the absolute cut between divine and human

law which Antigone and Creon and his feminist readers are presuming, then the transgression Hegel cites as involved in Antigone's act is not the boundary crossing involved in speaking in the public sphere, but her insistence on asserting closure for the ethical life of kinship, constructing a boundary which cannot be sustained.

The interpretation of Hegel's treatment of *Antigone* I have offered, following Harris, has the advantage that it accounts for what otherwise would seem to be bizarre anomalies, internal contradictions and oversights in Hegel's account. It cannot, however, provide an explanation for the last of the puzzles referred to above, one which has been particularly significant for feminist critiques of Hegel's interpretation. *How is it that the examination of Antigone's specific crime is able to transmute into a generalized transhistorical claim about the role of woman in relation to the community?*

Womankind – the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community – changes by intrigue the universal end of government into a private end, transforms its universal activity into a work of some particular individual, and perverts the universal property of the state into a possession and ornament for the Family. Woman in this way turns to ridicule the earnest wisdom of mature age which, indifferent to purely private pleasures and enjoyments, as well as to playing an active part, only thinks of and cares for the universal. (Hegel, 1977: 288)

I have argued that two key features common to the feminist readings of Hegel are misrepresentations: first, that Hegel fixes an essential distinction between divine and human law, nature and spirit, public and private; second, that Hegel affirms the victory of the latter over former principles. But if this is so, then Hegel's analysis of Greek ethical life gives us no grounds for understanding woman's role as outside of history or as inevitably locked into the private sphere. If this is the case then to the extent that Hegel claims that women are *necessarily* beyond history he is wilfully departing from his own philosophical insights. If we adopt the above interpretation of Hegel on *Antigone* then Hegel's misogyny is confirmed on Hegelian grounds.

To read Hegel as affirming the purity of the realms of divine and human law is to read him in terms of Antigone's and Creon's mistakes about the nature of ethical life. These are mistakes which identify ethical life and pure self-determination with the absolute conquest or exclusion of otherness. This kind of mistake haunts debates between the feminist philosophies represented by Mills, Irigaray and Butler as something to be avoided, yet also as one which is difficult to avoid in attempts to articulate feminist philosophy and politics. For Mills,

Hegel incorporates an account of sexual difference into a broader, predetermined pattern for understanding the development of self-consciousness as the domination of nature. Her argument against Hegel is twofold: first, she claims that Hegel does not allow woman an identity which permits proper participation in the dialectical conflicts which underpin the progress of spirit; because women are defined in quasi-natural terms, they do not even figure as particulars to challenge and be subsumed by higher universals. Second, Mills claims that Hegel's emphasis on the universal over the particular and his focus on reconciliation as the ultimate ethical end is ethically inadequate – it closes down the dialectical process and the ongoing possibility of subversion and change. In both of these arguments, although they are formulated through the discussion of Antigone's heroism, there are echoes of Creon's hubris. According to Creon the realm of self-determination (of human law, of history and civilization) transcends the realm of given determination and dependency. Mills's story, unlike Creon's, is one in which women participate as well as men in the onward march of spirit. But, as with Beauvoir (and Creon), this march remains understood as a process of encounter with and transcendence of otherness. What becomes lost is the unrecognized and curious ongoing relation between dependence (determination by natural other and mutual dependence of different versions of ethical consciousness) and self-determination which characterizes the realms of both human and divine law in Hegel's account.

In Irigaray's case, she is able to see the absurdity of Creon's denial of Antigone's duty, because of his dependence on that which she represents, but doesn't see Antigone's identification of her own ethical consciousness as absolutely other as symmetrically problematic. Irigaray hints at the *sui generis* nature of Antigone's ethical identity, or at least the ethical identity she gestures towards (however inexpressible) while demonstrating the impossibility of human law as existing *sui generis*. In so far as this understanding of the *Antigone* is mapped onto a gendered division of ethical labour this then confirms in Irigaray's account the primary significance of sex and gender in mapping out the possibilities of spirit in Hegel's story. This reading is reinforced by Hegel's notorious remarks in Paragraph 475 quoted above, which give plausibility to the Irigarayan reading in which woman is the excluded and simultaneously subversive element in spirit (Hegel, 1977: 287–8). However, this reading does not fit with the vast majority of the rest of Hegel's argument here, which does not confirm woman's ethical specificity, but rather undermines any such understanding. It is Antigone's mistake just as much as it is

Creon's mistake to identify herself absolutely and immediately with a specific ethical self-consciousness. The disagreement between Irigaray and Hegel (in spite of common ground shared) is not the disagreement between Antigone and Creon, but between Antigone, Creon and Irigaray on the one hand and Hegel (but also the spectator or reader of the play or of Hegel's account of it) on the other. What is learned from the play for Hegel is less to do with sexual difference *per se* than with the fact that, in so far as both man and woman are spiritual beings, they are mistaken in understanding themselves in the terms of givenness and closure which characterize instinctual (animal) as opposed to self-conscious (ethical) activity. Ironically, it is only this misunderstanding which permits the absolute identification which both Creon and Antigone display with human and divine law respectively. This is an identification which is willed not given.

Butler, like Mills and Irigaray, reads Hegel as affirming the distinction between the realms of divine and human law, kinship and the state. Like Mills and Irigaray also, she identifies Antigone as a feminist heroine. In contrast to the other two commentators, however, for Butler, Antigone's heroism lies not in her purity (whether ultimately identified with human or divine law or something lying beyond that binary) but in her contamination. Mills uses (negative) dialectic to escape the fixed, binary divisions implicit in her reading of the divine/human law distinction. Irigaray looks to the outside beyond the constitutive outside signified by divine law to escape the domination of human law and its conditions of possibility. Butler, I suggest, stays much closer to the reading of Hegel's *Antigone* given above, in which not the confirmation but the unsustainability of particular stable categories is at stake. However, in seeing Antigone as destabilizing and disrupting the given orders of kinship and state, Butler rejects Hegel's account of Antigone's relation to human law as one implicit in the mutual dependence of nature and spirit, private and public sphere. Butler's rejection of the ontological status of categories of determination and self-determination make her argument difficult to grasp other than as a celebration of a power of disruption which breaks through, rather than being always already implicit within symbolic and social orders. Antigone comes to stand for 'anti-law' in Butler's account (anti-kinship and anti-state), even when she acts through law. But to be 'anti-law' in this sense is to usurp the place of Creon, of arbitrary and persistent legislation, only this time with irony (Battersby, 1998: 121-4).

The identification of woman as other to man, with nature over and against spirit and with the private sphere over and against the public

is at the core of feminist dissatisfaction with Hegel on *Antigone*, just as it was at the core of Beauvoir's dissatisfaction with the standard answers to the question 'what is woman?'. As with Beauvoir and the struggle for recognition, exploring feminist encounters with Hegel on *Antigone* opens up philosophical questions and debates about sex, gender and identity which continue to bear the trace of those encounters. This trace is both negative and positive: negative in that all three feminist thinkers considered here constitute their positive claims about sex, gender and identity through the exclusion of Hegel. It is also positive in so far as the destabilizing movements of Hegel's text, the ambiguities and blind spots, whether he was aware of them or not, reappear in Mills's critical feminism, Irigaray's sexual difference feminism and Butler's postmodernist feminism. They reappear most obviously in Mills's case in her conscious appropriation of the struggle for recognition, an appropriation which I have suggested, like Beauvoir's, harks back to a Kojévian account. But they are also apparent in Irigaray's reworking of the mutual dependence of divine and human law into the asymmetrical dependence of the patriarchal symbolic order on the exclusion of woman as other, and in Butler's celebration of Antigone's contaminated voice. Mills, Irigaray and Butler all exemplify the kind of reading of canonic philosophical work which was identified by Lloyd as 'collaborative' (see chapter 1). In my critical engagement with their work, I have clearly indicated another path of collaboration with a rather different Hegel. This alternative path follows through Mills's, Irigaray's and Butler's rejection of the binary concepts of woman/man, nature/spirit and private/public as mutually exclusive oppositions, but suggests rather different conclusions.

4.3 Towards a Hegelian Feminist Philosophy

In the previous section I suggested that shades of binary oppositions persist within the ontological, epistemological and normative claims which are involved in the critical, sexual difference and postmodernist philosophical positions represented by Mills, Irigaray and Butler. This can be seen in the way in which the attempts to move beyond the hierarchical dualisms of the philosophical tradition involve reference to a moment of transcendence or transgression which imply a 'beyond'. This 'beyond' is a privileged site of being which underpins authoritative feminist judgement and is identified in mutually exclusive contrast to its denigrated other. For Mills, this privileged site is

identified with the capacity for self-determination (negativity) in the dialectical movement and direction of history, as opposed to determination by natural causality. For Irigaray and Butler, this site is identified with an absolute otherness which cannot be conceptualized, but can only be gestured towards or break through to disrupt the norm. Mills, Irigaray and Butler all rely on invoking conditions of possibility for accounts of women, sex and gender which are bound up with an alterity which escapes the ordinary realm of the mutual dependence and determination of nature and spirit. Critical (in the general sense) engagement with the question of what it means to be a woman apparently necessitates the invocation of an idea of disengagement from nature, history and language, as well as from the masculinist conceptual frameworks through which they have been traditionally understood.

It was argued in chapters 1 and 2 that the move to the invocation of externality, a place beyond, as a way of escaping the 'way of despair' is very difficult to sustain conceptually without lapsing back into binary thinking, in which a new value hierarchy is set up and a new set of barriers to thought is constructed. This is the argument Hegel makes repeatedly in relation to different shapes of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, particularly in relation to Kantian critical philosophy, which (Hegel argues) undermines its own project by relying on the absolute distinction between autonomous and heteronomous realms. When thought is defined in contradistinction to nature and spirit, or spirit in contradistinction to nature, the strategy of reason remains confined to one-sidedness and is always marked by an inability to grasp either the excluded 'other' side or the conditions of possibility of its own authority. Thus, Mills may be accused of relying on an unrealizable conception of autonomy, which reinstates and subsumes feminist politics under the masculinist norm of abstract, universalizable freedom, and of failing to grasp history in its actuality. Irigaray may be accused of identifying woman with a subject position which can neither be conceived nor transformed, and thus of leaving the world very much as it is. Butler may be accused of undermining the possibility of any coherent feminist ethics or politics by denying any stable ground for responding to the question of the meaning of women, sex and gender, and reducing freedom to arbitrariness. The way in which critical, sexual difference and postmodernist feminists read and respond to each other challenges their claim to have refused the either/or choice to which Beauvoir's philosophy is seen to have succumbed. But if Mills, Irigaray and Butler can be read as returning to dualisms which they have claimed to overcome, what does this

suggest about an alternative approach? In this and previous chapters, I have argued that a certain interpretation of Hegel's philosophy offers an alternative approach to formulating a way of thinking about being and truth which does not re-inscribe binary hierarchies or undermine the possibility of judgement. In what follows I attempt to sketch out a feminist ontology and epistemology which draws on this alternative Hegelianism.

In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*. (Hegel, 1977: 10)

As was noted in chapter 2, throughout his work Hegel, following Kant, consistently draws the contrast between reason in its comprehensive sense and reason as the application of subjective categories to externally presented objects. According to Hegel, comprehensive reason involves moving beyond the alternatives of reading the relation between subject and object in any given proposition as either indifferent otherness or sameness. Instead he insists that the relation is inherently dynamic, simultaneously both identity and non-identity. This identity and non-identity is not a simple bilateral relationship between universal and particular taken in isolation, but an aspect of a greater immanent connection between reason, spirit and nature, in which each finds itself in the other. This means that whatever the content of a claim may be, that is, whether it is to do with nature, spirit or thought itself, the rational activity of the knowing subject is immanently connected to that which it is seeking to understand. One way in which the nature of this immanent connection has traditionally been understood in Hegel scholarship is as a statement of philosophical idealism. In other words, as the claim that reality is mind dependent in the sense of being the construction of prior conscious activity in the form of God or 'World Spirit'. In contrast to this, I argue that there is no absolute a priori in Hegel's philosophy, and that neither the subject nor object of knowledge have logical priority in determining the validity of any particular claim to truth. Instead truth is conceived as a matter of both the experience and recognition of identity and non-identity between subject-knowers (which include both the philosopher and the philosopher's readers) and objects of knowledge. Reason, the process of comprehension, cannot transcend nature and spirit, since they form the conditions of its possibility. However, the being of nature and spirit does not refer to any fixed essence; the conditions of possibility of thought are self-changing.

This means that Hegel's own philosophies of nature, spirit and reason are inevitably conditioned by his time and place, a time and place which, according to Hegel, was defined in terms of the recently philosophically and politically articulated self-understanding of spirit as self-determination.

The relation of reason, spirit and nature to each other is one of simultaneous identity and non-identity. Reason seeks to comprehend nature and spirit but it does so as always already mediated through nature and spirit, which are equally mediated through each other. The dynamic of life inherent in organic being takes on new dimensions for self-conscious (but also organic) beings which have implications for self-development in the realms of spirit and nature. These implications can never be clear in advance, but they include the possibility of shifting the boundaries between natural and spiritual being. This is exemplified in Hegel's account of the formation of self-conscious being in the *Phenomenology*, from the organic grounding of desire to the slave's refashioning of material objects (Hegel, 1977: 104–19). Hegel's conception of spirit in terms of self-determination is very different from the transcendent view of self-determination as autonomy or as pure self-legislation which he identifies in Kant's philosophy and the politics of revolutionary terror. Spirit as such cannot step outside of itself and when thought conceives itself as having found an outside, unchanging ground from which to legislate for spirit then it is always mistaken. Truth has to be understood not only in terms of both substance and subject but also in terms of the whole, a whole which in being self-changing is also incapable of providing a secure, transhistorical ground for judgement.

In the *Phenomenology* Hegel's pathway out of the way of despair does not depend on finding some alternative road for thought to travel. Instead, he relies on demonstrating how the binary hierarchies of thought are self-subverting. His argument depends on showing how the one-sided recognition of either identity or non-identity as the key to a particular account of the relation between subject and object of knowledge fails from the point of view of the experience of the subject-knower and of the observing consciousness of the reader. This failure is understood not simply in terms of the inadequacy of categories of thought, but as a lack of fit between the experienced being of subjects and objects of knowledge. The story of the *Phenomenology* is a story in which recognition is always misrecognition and in which the overcoming of misrecognition does not imply moving on to some new framework for thought, but on the acknowledgement of the inevitable partiality of claims to know. The paradox of Hegel's

'absolute knowledge' is that, if we take it seriously, it is historically contingent and necessarily provisional. A feminist ontology and epistemology which took its cue from Hegel would be one which was premised on the idea of the simultaneous identity and non-identity of being and truth. The identity between being and truth refers to the dependence of thought on experienced being. The non-identity of being and truth refers to the limitlessness of being and the necessary partiality of any particular claim to truth.

Yet, as Beauvoir, Mills, Irigaray and Butler have all demonstrated, it seems that Hegel's treatment of women, sex and gender in his work depends on familiar fixed conceptual hierarchies which take women out of the self-changing realm of mutually mediating reason, spirit and nature described above. Is it possible for an ontology and epistemology derived from Hegel's thought to avoid what Newman has termed Hegel's theoretical violence against women (Newman, 1994)?¹⁴ In what follows I will argue the paradoxical line that it is the case that Hegel is guilty of theoretical violence in some of his claims about women, but that this theoretical violence can be both identified and criticized through the account of reason, knowledge and truth derived from Hegel's own work. In other words, I will argue that Hegel can be accused of theoretical violence towards women only in so far as he abandons his own account of the nature and authority of knowledge claims. Pursuing this argument yields insights into what is implied by the approach to being and truth that I have identified in Hegel.

In reflecting back on the reading of Hegel given above, three factors emerge as relevant to the evaluation of knowledge claims. First, the partiality of all claims to knowledge is inherent in Hegel's account of the partial identification of particular knowing subjects with spirit. For Hegel 'absolute' knowledge rests on the explicit articulation of this partiality so that, paradoxically, truth is linked to partiality's acknowledgement. This implies that claims which disguise their partiality are immediately open to criticism. Second, Hegel emphasizes the significance of the articulation of the partial grounds of any judgement to the possibility of recognition of the validity of this claim by others. This recognition is best understood as a 'sharing' which rests on the degree to which the audience of any claim can identify with its grounding. This therefore implies that for Hegel knowledge claims can be evaluated by the extent to which they are recognized to be shareable – something which cannot be judged *a priori*, and is not in any sense in the gift of the subject making the claim. Third, Hegel argues for the historical contingency or provisionality of claims made

in a world of self-changing subjects and objects. This means that no knowledge claim can be put forward as true for all time, and any such claim is open to criticism. Let us go on to put these principles of evaluation to work in the judgement of Hegel's two major arguments about women: first, that as female they embody a natural principle of passivity; second, that women are essentially suited to an ethical role within the family and lack the capacity for direct engagement in the state and civil society.

In the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel illustrates the female (passive) and male (active) principles at work in nature in animal species (Hegel, 1970a: 411–14). His argument relies on descriptions of the process of reproduction in various species which form the basis of a generalization about reproductive processes, which is then slotted into the idea of female passivity as the condition for and recipient of male activity. According to the criteria identified above, the validity of Hegel's claims here rests on the extent to which he acknowledges the partiality of his claim, i.e., that he is 'seeing' from a particular point of view; the extent to which his view is shareable; and the recognition of its provisionality. On all of these counts Hegel's claims about female nature fail to convince. First, he does not acknowledge the partiality of his claims (thus contradicting his own account of knowledge as an aspect of the self-relations of spirit). As feminist critics have consistently pointed out, it is clear that others could not see what Hegel claims to see in his descriptions, unless they shared the identification of male with 'active' and female with 'passive' through which Hegel makes sense of the observations he selects. Second, an examination of the conditions of possibility of Hegel's perspective (and others like it), has been demonstrated to be less and less shareable, particularly (but not only) by women, who do not identify with the plant-like qualities with which Hegel associates them (Hegel, 1991: 207). It is important to stress that not sharing Hegel's perspective is not simply a matter of choice on the part of other subject-knowers, but of the experience of a lack of fit between their own perspective and that of Hegel, an experience conditioned by both nature and spirit. Third, Hegel makes no allowance for the self-changing character of subjects and objects of knowledge in his accounts of male and female in the *Philosophy of Nature*; instead the claims are made as if transcendentally true in a way which contradicts his own understanding of the relations between reason, spirit and nature. For these reasons, I would argue that it is appropriate to see claims made about the female principle in Hegel's philosophy of nature as exemplifying theoretical violence towards women.

If we turn to look at Hegel's claims about women in society made on the basis of an understanding of spirit, rather than his claims about the female principle in nature, what emerges is somewhat different. In the *Phenomenology* (Hegel, 1977: 266–89) and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, 1991: 199–219), Hegel's claims about women rest on the identification of women not with a passive biological role but with a particular ethical role within the family which, in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, has its place in a complex of relations between family, civil society and the state. In the latter text Hegel's argument can be assessed as part of a broader argument about the nature of modern ethical life (see chapters 5 and 6). Rather than closing off the realm of the family from that of the public sphere, Hegel's exposition of the form of ethical life which instantiates a complex division of labour and institutionalizes private property and individual right demonstrates how civil society and the state constitute and are constituted by specific familial relations, as well as being in tension with them. There are no neat boundaries drawn between the different spheres; the family produces property-owners and citizens only because of the way it is constructed through legal relations; these relations are, however, constantly both subverted and supported by relations of love and vice versa. When Hegel refers to womankind as the 'everlasting irony' in the life of the community in the *Phenomenology* and reproduces this account in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, it is not an expulsion of gender from the story of spirit, but a recognition of the gendered construction of the private sphere as a constant challenge to the extreme particularism of civil society and to the supposedly neutral, abstract authority of law (Hegel, 1977: 288). Having said this, however, in so far as Hegel claims that his account of the place of women in contemporary ethical life is authorized by reference to a transhistorical female essence, then that account loses its validity.¹⁵ It does this in relation to each of the factors mentioned above. First, because it disguises a set of claims enabled by the particular perspective of early modern social relations as a set of claims grounded in universal, transhistorical female essence; second, because the perspective in question was not the only possible one even within the context of Hegel's own time and place, and was clearly not shared by all of Hegel's contemporaries, women and men, let alone by people reading these claims today; third, because it denies the possibility of spirit shifting its shape and of a world being created in which it was no longer even a set of partial truths.

There is theoretical violence in Hegel's analysis of women's place in modern social relations to the extent that Hegel presents his partial

vision, grounded in his own relative identity (identity and non-identity) with his time and place, as a universal prescription. However, in so far as his claims about the place of women in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* demonstrate an ethical interdependency and tension between pre-modern and modern social relations – the paradox of what Pateman refers to as the ‘sexual contract’ – then he is articulating an aspect of experience in modernity which is clearly compatible with a variety of prescriptive positions, and which has been vital in the articulation of feminist social and political theory (see chapter 6). The validity that Hegel’s account of women’s position does have will fade when the conditions which ground that validity have been transformed. This is a matter of the self-changing potential of both the subjects and objects of knowledge. A Hegelian account of knowledge permits the claim that it makes sense to say that Hegel is more wrong about women now than he was when he made his claims, because his partial grasp of the position of women has become less and less sustained by spirit and the forms of its self-understanding in science and philosophy. His position has therefore become less and less capable of being recognized or shared by the actual and potential audience of his argument. This is not a question of finding excuses for Hegel; rather, it is an attempt to understand the conditions for the production of truth as neither fixed nor arbitrary, but a matter of the complex potential of self-changing, self-interpreting being.

At the heart of Hegel’s account of knowledge is the acknowledgement of the inseparability of being and truth, the partiality of the knower and the provisionality of knowledge claims. The partiality of the knower is understood not in terms of cognitive bias, but of the partial ontological connection (in nature and in spirit) between both subject-knowers and objects of knowledge and between different subject-knowers. The provisionality of knowledge claims refers not to the idea that we may gain better and better access to the real through improved techniques and methods, but to the notion of the self-changing nature of subjects and objects of knowledge. This means that judgements of the validity of any given truth claim cannot be made on the basis of an elaboration of the epistemic authority or lack of it of the subject making the claim. On this basis, although there is clearly shared ground between the feminist epistemologies explored in chapter 1 and Hegelianism, the former still remain too attached to the idea of establishing the basis of claims to truth via elaboration of its conditions a priori. From a Hegelian point of view, the validity of claims to truth is a matter of the recognition of a truth by others. But this is a recognition which depends not on the idea of

a view from many 'wheres', as in Longino's 'cognitive democracy', nor even on the idea of a view from somewhere, as in Hartsock's feminist standpoint, but on the idea of the possibilities and constraints immanent in what it is to be where one is. This is a ground which is not stable, but in a way very different from the discursive relativism of Hekman's feminist postmodernist epistemology. Hegel's notion of grasping the truth both as substance and subject expresses this idea of the solid but self-moving medium within which claims are both made and judged.

Conclusion

The argument above has sought to show how Hegel offers an escape from the way of despair by following through the logic of despair itself, rather than identifying a transcendent path 'beyond'. It has also sought to show how this Hegelian account of being and truth may be used by feminist philosophers to assess Hegel's own claims about women, in a way which also avoids invocation of an external ground for judgement beyond the realms of nature and spirit. This argument is a contentious one in several respects. First, it is contentious in its reading of Hegel. Many Hegel scholars would disagree with the radical historicization of the conception of 'absolute knowledge' I am suggesting and would argue instead that Hegel sees himself as occupying a *transcendentally* true ground for judgement. Second, it is contentious for feminist philosophers suspicious of the claim that Hegel's misogyny is incidental rather than necessary to Hegelian philosophy (Newman, 1994). Third, it is contentious for feminist philosophers because even if the reading of Hegel is accepted, the move to a radical historicization of truth is associated with the undermining of the possibility of critical engagement with the historical and political status quo. Here feminist philosophy echoes Marx's complaint in the theses on Feuerbach. If philosophy, like the Owl of Minerva is a creature of hindsight, then how can philosophy critique and help to transform the world? For feminist philosophy the point of interpreting the world has always been linked to the project of changing it. For this reason, the feminist Hegelianism articulated above can be seen as anti-feminist by definition in its quietism. The first two objections clearly depend on the question of how Hegel's work is interpreted. In the previous three chapters I have attempted to elaborate an interpretation of Hegel which indicates the reasons why I do not find either of them convincing. However, setting aside the question of

Hegel interpretation and acknowledging that there are many philosophical routes by which one might arrive at the ontological and epistemological position I have outlined above, the third objection remains unanswered. The following chapters will address the third of these challenges to a Hegelian feminism of the kind I have outlined. In these chapters I will trace debates concerning moral and political agency, judgement and prescription within feminist philosophy. Within these debates the ambivalent relation of feminist philosophy to Hegelian thought will again be evident. My aim will be to demonstrate that feminist moral and political philosophy which thinks with Hegel does not undermine the possibility of critique and change.

Hegel and Feminist Ethics

Introduction

This chapter explores and interrogates the interconnections between feminist moral theory and Hegelianism, both explicitly acknowledged and implicit within the logic of feminist debate over the nature of moral subjectivity, agency and judgement. As in previous chapters, I argue that a more thorough Hegelian turn in feminist moral thought offers a way through some of the conceptual impasses by which the latter is characterized. As noted in chapter 1, feminist moral theory has followed a familiar pattern in which rationalist objections to the exclusion of women from full moral agency have been succeeded by alternative accounts of moral agency which draw on an account of sexual difference. The latter approaches argue for replacement of the universalism of mainstream deontological and consequentialist moral theory with an account of moral reasoning located specifically in qualities inherent in women's being and experience. The most well-known example of such an argument is the ethic of care discussed briefly in chapter 1 in the work of Gilligan. The accounts of both moral agency and moral judgement inherent in the ethic of care have provoked criticism from feminist ethicists from rationalist, critical and postmodernist perspectives. The first section of this chapter explores the feminist unease with care ethics as manifested in two critical engagements with it which come from different theoretical perspectives, both of which centre around the problem of defining moral subjectivity and the implications of this for judgement. The first is that of Elisabeth Porter, who criticizes accounts of moral identity which privilege either side of traditional binary oppositions, such as

mind over body or reason over emotion or vice versa. Porter argues for the moral agent to be understood in terms of a synthesis of attributes traditionally identified with masculine (ethic of justice) and feminine (ethic of care) characteristics. The second critique is that of Rosalind Diprose, who argues that traditional moral theory, care ethics and critical theorists such as Porter tend ultimately always to reduce sexual difference to sameness, and thereby block the development of an ethics for women which embraces their embodied subject position. Hegel figures as a significant point of reference within both Porter's and Diprose's arguments. However, in both cases, the assessment of Hegel's work in relation to developing a satisfactory feminist ethics is an ambivalent one. For both thinkers Hegel is both villain and hero – lapsing into masculinist exclusivism on the one hand and providing resources for feminist moral theory on the other.

Porter and Diprose exemplify critical and postmodernist feminist responses to care ethics. I suggest, however, that their attempts to move beyond the exclusive binaries within which mainstream and care ethics make sense continue to be trapped within the logic of the way of despair. The exploration of the arguments of Porter and Diprose illustrates deep tensions within feminist moral theory. These tensions are expressed in terms of two paradoxical requirements. On the one hand, the requirement simultaneously to transcend and to respect both identity and difference, autonomy and dependence in the understanding of moral agency. On the other hand, the requirement for feminist moral judgement simultaneously to be both phenomenological and critical, non-prescriptive and prescriptive. Any attempt at fulfilling these paradoxical requirements tends to fall foul of the criticism that it fails fully to account for one or other of the opposing constituents of the ideals of both agency and judgement.

Having identified both the logic of debates within feminist ethics over agency and judgement and the part played by Hegel in certain articulations of these debates, the second part of the chapter returns to look more closely at Hegel's own arguments as to the nature of moral agency and the moral point of view. The return to Hegel suggests a path towards an alternative to mainstream moral theory which also moves beyond the tensions and impasses traced within and between different strands of feminist ethics. It will be argued that this is the path which is actually being followed in the work of feminist moral philosophers such as Urban Walker. I will argue that Urban Walker's work reflects a Hegelian turn in three specific respects: first, in its account of moral agency; second, in that it presses for the inseparability of morality from the broader terrain of what Hegel terms ethical

life (including familial and political institutions and relations); and third, in terms of what it implies for the possibilities of moral judgement and prescription. In conclusion, consideration will be given to the charge that the kind of approach to moral theory implicit in Hegel's work, and which I am also attributing to Urban Walker, is necessarily antithetical to feminist morality and politics because it privileges phenomenology over critique. I will argue that while such an ethics does indeed alter standard expectations of what moral theory may accomplish, in fact the Hegelian turn is less likely to justify moral and political stasis than the traditional 'moral point of view'. In particular, I will suggest that it is the recognition of the inseparability of morality from politics which in both Hegelian and feminist thought opens up possibilities for challenging and changing the world as it is. The following chapter will pursue this suggestion by focusing on the sexual contract argument in both feminist and Hegelian thought.

5.1 Moral Identity and an Ethics of Difference

Feminist moral theory is engaged in a double quest: first, the search for a satisfactory feminist account of moral agency; second, the search for an account of the conditions of possibility of moral judgement. For some feminists the ethic of care is the fulfilment of both quests, while for others it is a false and even dangerous trail. Porter and Diprose represent two opposing, but equally critical, feminist reactions to the ethic of care, which simultaneously reject a return to more traditional ('justice') accounts of moral subjectivity and moral judgement (Porter, 1991; Diprose, 1994). Porter offers a 'synthesizing' alternative to care, which draws on object relations theory and exemplifies a feminist critical theory approach to ethics. Diprose offers a 'radicalizing' alternative to care, which is influenced by Irigaray's psychoanalytic perspective, but which is also heavily reliant on a postmodernist philosophical approach, including drawing on the work of Foucault and Derrida. Porter is motivated by the concern that care ethics entails a loss of critical power for moral judgement because of its reliance on weak notions of self and agency. Diprose finds care ethics inadequate to capture the ethical significance of sexual difference because object relations theory, as with mainstream accounts of moral agency, persists in identifying the subject as formed prior to ethics rather than as itself an ethos.

Both Porter and Diprose see the re-thinking of moral subjectivity as central to a more satisfactory feminist ethics. The role played by

Hegel in the work of both thinkers figures as one way in which the difficulty of re-thinking moral subjectivity along more synthetic or more radical lines is signalled. For Porter, Hegel figures ambivalently in her argument as a thinker who understands the subject in relational/synthetic terms and yet falls into dualism in the exclusion of feminine subjectivity and virtue from the public sphere. For Diprose also, Hegel figures ambivalently, as a philosopher who displays phenomenologically how embodied subjectivity in general and sexual difference in particular is produced at the expense of woman, and yet who simultaneously obscures this debt through the identification of moral subjectivity as such with male embodied subjectivity.

Porter formulates her argument for re-thinking moral identity and judgement in terms of two issues in particular: first, the inadequacies of the concept of moral identity implied either by the abstract autonomous agent of deontology or utilitarianism or by the exclusive sympathetic identification with others she associates with certain version of feminist (care) ethics (Porter, 1991: 158); second, the one-sidedness of a valorization of virtues associated solely with either justice or care (Porter, 1991: 47). She looks to replace the abstract, autonomous ego of traditional moral theory and the weakened, relational self of care ethics with what she terms a conception of 'self in relations', which combines strong autonomy with 'contextual adaptability' (Porter, 1991: 165). In order to counter the one-sidedness, she calls upon a synthetic and dialectical approach to moral evaluation. Throughout her argument, she resists the hierarchical dualism which underpins traditional moral theory, with its clear-cut hierarchical distinctions between reason and emotion, mind and body, autonomy and heteronomy *and*, she argues, gynocentric accounts of sexual difference which simply overturn this hierarchy. In addition, she identifies her own approach as distinct from postmodernist accounts of subjectivity (such as that of Diprose), which she sees as antithetical to the possibility of moral judgement and prescription altogether (Porter, 1991: 16).

In her articulation of a more synthetic conception of the moral agent, Porter relies on a version of object relations theory. Object relations theorists, drawing on aspects of Freud's thought, argue that differentiated gendered identities are formed during the early years of infancy and childhood (Chodorow, 1978; Squires, 1999: 56–8; 143–4). This occurs, it is claimed, through the radically different patterns of attachment and identification possible to girls and boys in relation to their mothers. While girls are able to identify with their mothers, boys are pushed into splitting off and demarcating their identity in

opposition to their mothers. This results in a greater degree of independence and individuation in the psyche of the male child, in comparison to the dependency and fuzzy ego boundaries characteristic of the female child (Chodorow, 1978: 54). This in turn influences characteristics displayed by men and women in adult life in ways that are clearly reflected in Gilligan's conception of two moral voices.¹ Porter, however, sees the importance of object relations theory not in its account of how gendered identities become fixed into two different moral voices, but in its account of self-development in terms of intersubjectivity.

Porter follows Jessica Benjamin in combining a reading of Hegel with a reading of Freud when accounting for the production of self-conscious subjects (Benjamin, 1988). Benjamin makes a connection between the argument for the intersubjective formation of subjectivity of object relations theory and Hegel's assertion as to the formation of spirit through a struggle for recognition (Benjamin, 1988: 31–6). However, Benjamin argues that both Hegel and Freud remain fixed in an oppositional understanding of the formation of subjectivity which condemns intersubjective relations to a pattern of domination and submission. In contrast to this, Benjamin asserts that what is needed is a model of intersubjective development which is premised on the recognition of mutual dependence as a condition of independence (Benjamin, 1988: 49). Porter takes this notion of mutual recognition as the key to an ideal of moral subjectivity which combines a strong sense of self-identity with the capacity to empathize with and respond to the other's difference through dialogic interaction.

Where there is mutual recognition, there is a sense of self as being differentiated from others, despite being intrinsically related to others. Without a firm sense of self, there is a submission to others or an attempt to assert the self through control of others. Rather than a strong personality, this control represents weakness: the need to dominate arises from anxiety about impotence. The alternative – taking pleasure in another's autonomy and inclinations – provides evidence of a sense of self defined in relation to and in differentiation from others. (Porter, 1991: 118)

In her concluding chapter Porter uses the example of feminist arguments about war and peace as an illustration of both the problems and possibilities involved in an ethics which claims to be 'a sociologically distinctive morality' peculiar to women. In a brief overview of a range of arguments about feminism and pacifism counterposed to masculinism and militarism she makes two things clear. First, any

ethics relying on the naturalizing of attributes linked to gendered characteristics is unsatisfactory in that it is exclusive and blocks the possibility of critique and change. This applies equally to traditional patriarchal arguments about women's incapacity and man's fitness for war and to feminist accounts which operate with the same distinction but an opposing value system. In both cases half the world becomes excluded from any dialectical engagement with assessing the values of the other half, and mutual recognition and understanding are ruled out a priori. Second, Porter draws attention to Ruddick's notion of maternal thinking as a major contribution to thinking about the ethics of political violence, one which is potentially inclusive and critical without being abstractly universal (Porter, 1991: 193). Porter's positive response to Ruddick brings out the features that her synthetic approach to delineating moral identity are aiming towards. The ideal of both moral identity and moral judgement combines inclusivity and critical power and relies on practical, particular relations of recognition, not a transcendent standpoint. To the extent that women have something specific to contribute to moral theory, it is in their experience of caring relations which are less commonly experienced by men. This is not a naturally given standpoint but one which emerges in practice and differentially depending on both individuals and contexts (Porter, 1991: 170).

Hegel occupies an interesting position in Porter's analysis. He is only rarely referred to explicitly, but when he does figure in the text it is partly as a thinker who provides useful tools for the synthetic project Porter has in mind, partly as one complicit in constructing the gendered dualities which Porter desires to challenge. In this sense, Porter's engagement with Hegel is typical of the left-Hegelian, critical feminist readings of Hegel discussed in previous chapters. The language Porter uses is thoroughly Hegelian, particularly in its use of notions of dialectic, mutual recognition and the ambition to move beyond an exclusive logic of identity. This is evident in Porter's account of moral judgement as it should be carried out by the 'self in relations' who is also adaptable to context. The ideal of judgement must allow for critique and, in relation to this requirement, Hegel is categorized with those thinkers who naturalize gendered social relations and thereby disallow critique and change. At the same time, this idea is envisaged in strongly Hegelian terms as a process of learning through the interrelation between universal principle and particular experience. In many ways, both in relation to the role of Hegel and to the substantive arguments concerning sexual difference that are being put forward, Porter's analysis is reminiscent of Beauvoir's and Mills's

readings of Hegel. As with both Beauvoir and Mills, Porter rejects the exclusion of women from the realm of moral significance and argues for their inclusion within the logic of dialectical development of particularity and universality. As with Mills in particular, Porter wants to argue not in terms of subsumption of women's particularity by men's universality but in terms of an ongoing dialectical synthesis between the two. Thus, as with Beauvoir and Mills, Hegel's account of the struggle for recognition provides both problem and solution in Porter's analysis.

Object relations theory and care ethics between them put moral subjectivity at the heart both of the problems with traditional moral theory and of a feminist ethics, whether one based on valorizing feminine virtue or one synthesizing masculine and feminine values and attributes. In all these cases, however, moral subjectivity is considered as the prerequisite for ethics, the idea being that a particular kind of self has moral capacity and agency, whether it is the autonomous ego, the maternal thinker or the product of mutual recognition which is in question. An alternative feminist approach to considerations of moral subjectivity, exemplified in Diprose's work, is critical of the presumption that the self precedes ethics (Diprose, 1994: 3). Diprose's aim is to develop an ethics of sexual difference which makes space for women's embodied subjectivity without normalization, by which she means the reduction and subsumption of difference to sameness. She identifies the latter as the mark of mainstream justice ethics, but also as a danger inherent in any moral theory which treats identity as formulated prior to ethical relation or which takes a critical theory approach to the fixing of moral values and principles (both dangers she sees as pronounced in the work of theorists such as Porter) (Diprose, 1994: 11–13; 133n). The former is problematic because, even if the self is taken to be formed in relation to others, once it is regarded as formed there can be no consideration of what has been excluded or expended in its formation, nor of how it may be reconstituted through further relation. The latter is problematic because the notion of dialectical synthesis presumes a common medium of exchange, in which interrelating subjects must necessarily be normalized, reduced to the same in certain respects (Diprose, 1994: 15–17). For Diprose, feminist arguments which link the female subject position to a particular set of values (whether naturally or contingently generated) rest on a mistake about the nature of 'sexed and embodied' subjectivity which is shared by mainstream ethics. This mistake is to conceptualize the moral subject as finished or completed. The point about moral agency, for Diprose, is that it is constantly produced

and reproduced through relations which are inherently corporeal and political. These relations are corporeal in the sense, following Hegel and Merleau-Ponty, that bodies are ways of being in the world which cannot be split into a self which owns or operates or has rights over a body. They are political in that these relations are always also power relations which give priority to certain modes of embodied engagement with others over other such modes (Diprose, 1994: 18–37). Diprose's radicalization of the notion of ethical subjectivity has specific consequences for the role of ethical judgement and prescription within her argument. In contrast to Porter, as well as to the paradigms of justice and of care, Diprose argues for the detachment of ethics from the task of prescription. Because the moral agent is constantly produced and reproduced, what is right for that agent is also constantly produced and reproduced, so the notion of judgement from some moral high ground becomes redundant. 'Ethics, understood as the interrogative practice of that which constitutes our sexed and embodied place in the world, is not positive in the sense of providing rules for action or a blueprint for change' (Diprose, 1994: 131).

Diprose makes her position clear in the final chapter of her book, in which she examines the implications of her account of ethics for feminist responses to ethical issues raised in the context of reproductive technology and surrogacy (Diprose, 1994: 102–30). She claims that masculine modes of embodied engagement, associated with individuation and the notion of self-ownership, are persistently privileged within the discourses which make up the worlds of both bio-medical science and bio-medical ethics. This privilege cannot be challenged by a feminist ethics which formulates the problem of women's oppression by patriarchal medicine and ethics in terms of the need for women to control their own bodies, because this is to buy into the masculinist conception. In addition, however, Diprose extends this critique to Porter's 'self in relations'. According to Diprose, this attempt to move beyond both naturalized sexual difference and bodies as individuated and self-owned still operates with the untenable notion of a distinction between self and body, and a lack of political awareness of how this distinction is produced and sustained. In place of Porter's synthetic approach, therefore, Diprose offers an argument for the recognition of radical fluidity in moral subjectivity and therefore also in judgement over issues such as surrogacy. The only certainty one has is that there is an overriding ethical imperative to resist any discourses which attempt to freeze-frame the meaning of moral agency at any given point. In this sense a notion of radical autonomy persists in Diprose's

own position. For Diprose, moral subjectivity and agency are under-determined; this permits challenges to any given account of what it means to act rightly and also suggests a moment of pure freedom in decision. 'Here freedom is understood as the open embodied engagement with others in the world rather than isolated sovereignty over one's body. So freedom is reduced, rather than enhanced, by keeping one's body to oneself' (Diprose, 1994: 113).

In order to make her argument against conceptions of moral agency and the moral high ground involved in mainstream, care and dialogical ethics, Diprose uses Hegel's account of the emergence of self-consciousness in the struggle for recognition and his treatment of *Antigone* (Diprose, 1994: 39). According to Diprose, Hegel makes clear the impossibility of closed or equivalent subjectivities in his account of the relational production of the self. First, on Hegel's account, selves are constituted through the incorporation of the other into the self. This is accomplished literally via repetition which leads to habit formation as the infant learns to control initially involuntary activities (Diprose, 1994: 45). Second, according to Diprose, although Hegel emphasizes the role of objective spirit in the formation of the subject, implying that the subject comes to reflect universal will, nevertheless on Hegel's own account the fact of socially produced embodiment signifies a moment of irreducible difference between any specific individual and objective spirit:

the habitual body cannot immediately reflect universal will because the body is what makes one an object or a sign for another and it is this positing of the body's difference from the Other (and the community will the Other represents) which gives rise to individual will. (Diprose, 1994: 45)

Diprose argues that for Hegel, the body is not a natural thing but is socially produced; it is, however, inherently specific and particular. She goes on to argue that the significance of embodied irreducible difference becomes something to be overcome and pushed aside in Hegel's account of the struggle for recognition, in which the possibility of equivalence between subjects is established (Diprose, 1994: 47). Thus Hegel effectively betrays his own insight in a sleight of hand which shifts his argument from the recognition of the irreducibility of embodied difference to a position in which he treats all bodies as if they were the same and subsumable under a universal will. However, Diprose argues, the normalizing move which is disguised in the story of the struggle for recognition is made evident in Hegel's treatment of

the story of *Antigone*, which is the story of both the production and suppression of sexual difference.

Diprose's analysis of Hegel's treatment of the *Antigone* story is influenced by Irigaray's. Diprose argues that Hegel's treatment of the play demonstrates two things: first, that the embodied difference of women is utterly excluded within Hegel's account of subjectivity; second, that the production of male subjectivity as the norm is indebted to women, and that women cannot appear in the story of spirit except in masculine terms. Diprose argues that Hegel understands sexual difference not in terms of female particularity pitted against male universality but in terms of a conflict between male individuality and the body of the community, which in effect repeats the struggle for recognition. Women are placed in this story in terms of a duty to bodies other than their own, their own bodies being given no space of appearance at all outside of the ethos of care. Hegel is an important contributor to the production of sexual difference as a problem for women because in his account of the emergence of ethical life (through the story of *Antigone*) he excludes the meaning of woman's subject position from recognition in either private or public sphere (Diprose, 1994: 55–64). Thinkers such as Porter, in Diprose's view, repeat the problem set up by Hegel as if it were the solution by relying on a version of the struggle for recognition to underpin the notion of moral agency. To enter into a struggle for recognition is already to accept an understanding of agency based on the male as norm (Diprose, 1994: 54).

But if it is still the case that a male embodied ethos is the norm then we have yet to break the habit of sexual 'difference' which constitutes women's bodies as not-yet-at-home, as alien to women's best interests and to those of public life. Nor does valorizing women's apparent shared moral perspective of care and interrelatedness overcome these difficulties: such an ethos is based on the same process of alienation – on women's representation of, and duty to, a body other than our own. (Diprose, 1994: 64)

Both Porter and Diprose are seeking to find a feminist moral theory which neither lapses back into the abstractions of mainstream consequentialism and deontology, nor reproduces what are found to be unsatisfactory elements of care ethics. Both theorists use Hegel in their attempts to think beyond this conundrum. Porter calls for the synthesis of identity and difference, Diprose for the recognition but not the essentialization of radical difference as the basis for thinking a feminist ethics. In Porter's case the possibility of synthesis is accounted for in

terms of a story of the formation of ethical subjectivity, an account which relies heavily on Hegel's notion of the struggle for recognition. In Diprose's case also the focus is on an account of the formation of subjectivity which draws on Hegel both positively and negatively. On the positive side, she argues that Hegel displays the politics of care, that is, that woman's duty of care is produced through power and exclusion. On the negative side, however, she argues that in Hegel's account of the struggle for recognition and the *Antigone* story we find foreshadowed the subsumption of difference through the assertion of equivalence, which is the hallmark of mainstream accounts of moral agency and of feminist care and critical theory alternatives.

In spite of their differences, however, we find, when we look closely at what is at issue between Porter's and Diprose's arguments, a clear echo of elements familiar from the debates between 'justice' and 'care'. Diprose charges Porter with producing an account of moral subjectivity which reduces sexual difference to sameness by arguing for a single model of genuine moral agency, and therefore prescribing masculinist norms (Diprose, 1994: 12–15). Porter charges theorists such as Diprose with undermining the possibility of critical moral judgement and prescription because of their particularism and relativism, so that all that is left in the account of moral agency is pure decisionism (Porter, 1991: 16). The same kinds of complaint which care ethics makes of traditional moral theory and vice versa are repeated in the argument between feminist critical theory and feminist postmodernist perspectives. These are complaints which return feminist ethics to the philosophical questions by which it is persistently haunted in its attempts to establish the nature of moral subjectivity, agency and judgement. How does a feminist theory of moral judgement negotiate between universality and particularity in the account of both its ground and its scope? How can a feminist account of the nature of moral agency and judgement keep open the meaningfulness of a feminist project to challenge and change the world? Porter and Diprose both draw on Hegel's work in their particular responses to these questions; in the following section we will follow their lead by returning to examine Hegel's work more closely in the critique that he too offers of what he terms 'the moral point of view'.

5.2 Hegel, the 'Moral Point of View' and 'Ethical Life'

There are two places in his mature work in which Hegel engages explicitly and critically with the idea of a moral point of view. These

are in the discussions in the *Phenomenology* and in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* respectively (Hegel, 1977: 364–409; 1991: 105–86). When Hegel uses the expression ‘moral point of view’ he is not referring to any and every ethical worldview, but to moral perspectives which are bound up with a strong emphasis on individual agency and judgement, and which assume a radical split between the moral (located in the non-material realm – autonomous and independent) and the non-moral (located in the material realm – heteronomous and dependent). These characteristics are, he argues, manifest in the Kantian model of moral agency and judgement but also in the romantic notion of conscience and conscientious agency and judgement. The defining marks of morality in Hegel’s account are self-legislation, self-justification and self-certainty (Hegel, 1977: 364). The moral point of view entails self-legislation in the sense that the individual prescribes what is right for themselves (whether what is right is apparent through reason or inner conviction). It entails self-justification, because it is the motivation of the agent which is in the end crucial to the judgement of the morality of his or her acts. It entails self-certainty because it is the moral agent’s honesty with themselves in terms of their own motivation which ultimately grounds the possibility of morality at all. There are obvious links between what Hegel terms the ‘moral point of view’ and the targets of feminist critique of mainstream moral theory, in particular the assumptions about agency and judgement typical of deontological moral theory.

Hegel’s central claim about the moral point of view is that it is necessarily linked to its own failure. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel illustrates the tensions internal to the moral point of view through tracing a variety of reversals and overturnings which accompany attempts to be moral and act morally within the terms set by the moral point of view (Hegel, 1977: 365–6). He examines Kant’s account of morality and the way in which it is premised on an unbridgeable distinction between pure practical reason and nature. On this account, morality is ideally pure in the sense of being untouched by sensuous/natural motivation. But, as Hegel points out, in any actual judgement or action it is impossible to sustain the division between reason and nature which grounds morality. It is always necessary for nature to ‘adulterate’ morality since one must be moral within an actual world (Hegel, 1977: 381). This renders morality inherently paradoxical since what it aims towards (the control of natural by rational determination) is defined in terms of a collapse of the distinction upon which the possibility of morality is grounded. Morality in Kant’s sense is a perpetual progress which can never actually arrive (Hegel, 1977: 382–3).

One way of rescuing the purity of morality is to drive it ever further back into the recesses of subjectivity through the invocation of conscience and inner feeling or intuition. This is a move Hegel identifies in romantic reactions to Kant's rationalism and moral dualism. The romantic hero/heroine is the beautiful soul who exemplifies a perfection of moral subjectivity (the inner certainty of what is right), but who is fated to die because moral perfection (essentially ethereal) cannot realize itself within the world of sense. Not only that, but the actions of the beautiful soul are inevitably misrecognized as selfishly motivated since there is no access for the outsider to the moral source of those actions which the beautiful soul knows instinctively (Hegel, 1977: 400). In his discussion of morality, Hegel traces the ways in which the moral viewpoint relies upon and perpetually reinvents distinctions between pure and adulterated, autonomous and heteronomous, inner and outer motivation. In the end, morality inevitably reduces to arbitrariness in so far as it is identified with a particular will (Hegel, 1977: 404–5). The principle of conscience, Hegel argues, is necessarily as much evil as good, since both evil and good on this account of morality are rooted in and justified by self-certainty. Any attempt to exercise moral agency and judgement threatens to undermine what have been claimed to be its conditions of possibility. Any investigation of its conditions of possibility reveal a world beyond and constitutive of morality, the realms of nature and spirit.

The discussion of the moral point of view in the *Phenomenology* follows on from the account of the French revolutionary terror and precedes the discussion of the history of religion as a form of spirit's self-understanding. In *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, morality is discussed between the account of abstract right on the one hand and the family, civil society and the state on the other. In both cases, Hegel is making a point about the historical specificity of the moral point of view and the inadequacy of its own account of itself as an ahistorically given aspect of human agency and judgement. For Hegel, not only is morality a distinctively modern phenomenon, it is also the way of thinking which most clearly manifests the distinctive temptation to one-sidedness of modernity. This is the temptation for spirit to understand itself in terms of discrete individuality, independent of both nature and spirit, that is, of both natural and social determination. In opposition to this, Hegel argues that the moral point of view is only intelligible as a dimension and reflection of the broader terrain of ethical life (Hegel, 1991: 185–6).

At this point it becomes necessary to look more closely at what Hegel means by the term 'ethical life' before turning back to see how

this notion fits in with the re-thinking of moral subjectivity, agency and judgement within the work of theorists such as Porter and Diprose. As we have seen, the concept of 'ethical life' is introduced in the *Phenomenology* with the discussion of Greek ethical life as part of the story of the production and reproduction of self-conscious knowing and being (spirit). As is evident in both the *Phenomenology* and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ethical life is spirit in the most concrete sense, it encompasses all aspects of social existence and is fundamentally historical in that it changes itself through time. The dynamic of change is immanent, implicit in the tensions within and between the modes of self-understanding, the relations, traditions, practices and institutions through which any particular form of ethical life is constructed. In his phenomenology and in his philosophy of history, Hegel attempts to reconstruct the logic of development within ethical life. However, he does this always from the perspective of his understanding of the form of ethical life which he inhabits and which he identifies as distinctive in certain crucial respects from alternative forms. The most elaborate exposition of this distinctive form of ethical life is given in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, and it is in this text that he articulates most clearly the conditions of possibility of moral agency and judgement beyond the 'moral point of view' within the context of an emerging modernity.

The most important claim made in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, and possibly the most well-known claim Hegel makes anywhere in his work, is made in the Preface. Here, he rejects approaches to political philosophy which attempt to establish blueprints for how the world ought to be and argues instead that the purpose of such philosophy is to comprehend present actuality:

since philosophy is *exploration of the rational*, it is for that very reason *comprehension of the present and the actual*, not the setting up of a *world beyond* which exists God knows where – or rather, of which we can very well say that we know where it exists, namely in the errors of a one-sided and empty ratiocination. (Hegel, 1991: 20)

There are two implications of Hegel's argument as to the status of his philosophy of right which impinge on accounts of moral agency and judgement: first, for Hegel, both agency and judgement are fundamentally 'this worldly', in the sense that they are an inseparable part of the contemporary form of ethical life – even when presented as products of something over and above nature or spirit; second, for Hegel, the idea of formulating moral theory in philosophical abstraction in

order to account for moral agency and judgement does not make sense. The ways in which we (any 'we') act and judge as moral agents, and the ways in which we theorize that action and judgement are both always already implicated in the form of ethical life we inhabit. To understand the conditions of possibility for moral agency and judgement as a moral theorist entails understanding ethical life. This is only possible when the theorist self-consciously engages with her own conditions of possibility as a moral judge and actor. Hegel's philosophy of right demonstrates that the understanding of the conditions of moral judgement and action embodied in the moral point of view is based on a misrecognition of what it means for spirit to be self-determining. The moral point of view is illusory, not because it is completely false, but because it elevates a partial truth about individual subjectivity to the level of a transcendent, universal standpoint which exists beyond spirit and nature. This is an illusion, however, which plays a significant role in the production and reproduction of the form of ethical life of which it is a part. To grasp this dynamic is to grasp the meaning and potential of moral agency and judgement in Hegel's time.

As mentioned above, Hegel's discussion of morality in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is positioned between his exposition of abstract right on the one hand and ethical life on the other. In the course of the text Hegel displays how exposition of abstract legal right requires the notion of individual moral agency to make sense of individual culpability in crime and punishment. Following on from this, he demonstrates that moral agency in turn is unintelligible outside of systems of values and principles which are institutionalized within ethical life, in private relations (family), in civil relations (civil society) and in legal and political institutions (state). At the same time, however, Hegel's text also demonstrates that ethical life in its three dimensions of family, civil society and state can be read as constitutive of the moral and legal aspects of individual existence in both principle and practice. Whichever way one reads the argument, however, morality is placed in the middle, the place between the distinctively modern identity of a discrete, individual rights bearer and the complex institutionalization of that identity in the positive law of the state, the commercial and associational relations of civil society and the private interrelation of family life. For Hegel, the moral point of view is an aspect of the principles and practices of collective (personal, social, political) existence. When the dominant principles and practices of that existence both rely on and concretely reproduce members of ethical life as abstract individuals, then this

will be reflected in a notion of morality as separate from ethical life, a realm of autonomy as opposed to heteronomy. The notion of moral autonomy is demonstrated to be an illusion, in that moral agency and judgement premised on the radical independence inherent in the moral point of view is shown to be strictly and absolutely dependent on a highly complex legal, social and political order. At the same time, however, the notion of moral autonomy is able to flourish and have effects precisely because of the nature of this ethical order.

The moral point of view is an illusion in the sense that it relies on misrepresenting its own conditions of possibility, but it is still a constituent part of the actuality with which Hegel argues the philosophy of right is concerned. This is not, however, a straightforward story in which the moral point of view reflects and therefore reinforces mutually consistent practices and experiences of independent subjects. In his analysis of ethical life within the family, civil society and the state, Hegel displays how the fictions of independent subjectivity are sustained through relations of inequality and at the expense of certain categories of subjects, in particular those in poverty and women. Civil society is marked by deep tensions between the appearance of equality of contracting parties in commercial relations and actual inequality in which the security and wealth of some is purchased at the expense of others (Hegel, 1991: 265). The sphere of the family produces independent subjects but only through the confinement of women to the sphere of caring labour. The prime task of the mother is to educate the child morally (Hegel, 1991: 210–13).² Hegel sees the moral point of view as inextricable from relations of power and inequality within modern society. All subjects participate in (are identical and non-identical with) the myth of moral autonomy to some extent (even the poor and women); all subjects are also fundamentally dependent (are identical and non-identical with spirit and nature). However, there are different patterns of dependency and different implications of those patterns for different subjects, both in terms of the self-understanding possible to them and in terms of their concrete material condition. The dislocation between the myth of the moral point of view and the complex condition of actuality will be experienced more powerfully by some subjects than by others (Gauthier, 1999).

If we turn back to consider the arguments of feminist moral theorists such as Gilligan, Porter or Diprose we find certain thematic commonalities with Hegel in the critique of the mainstream moral point of view which is offered. Like Hegel, the feminist theorists stress the illusory nature of the idea of access to an Archimedean point which conditions mature moral judgement and action. They seek to

demonstrate how the capacity for moral agency and judgement is actually embodied and embedded in the 'adulterated' terrain of personal, social and political existence. It is clear that all of these feminist theorists accept that practical reason is not pure and that there is an unavoidable heteronomy of moral motivation, judgement and action (Urban Walker, 1998: 203). Moreover, as with Hegel, they are sensitive to the impact the notion of moral autonomy and an individually accessible moral truth has had, though in the case of the feminist theorists attention is drawn particularly to the role of that fiction in shoring up stories about sexual difference which have worked to the detriment of women. At the same time, however, there is a tendency to reinvent something like the moral point of view within feminist moral theories which begin by deconstructing it. This is evident in Gilligan's notion of a 'different voice'. It is also evident in the way in which Porter wishes to hold onto a strong account of moral agency as a condition of possibility for authoritative moral judgement. Even in Diprose's case, which is most Hegelian in its account of the production of subjectivity, she relies on invoking a moment of external freedom in her notion of the necessary underdetermination of any particular instantiation of embodied subjectivity and agency. The moral point of view, even when it has been debunked and discredited, remains enormously tempting for feminist moral theorists because of ways in which it offers the possibility of grounding and legitimating feminist critique and challenge. Feminists are concerned about following a fully Hegelian path because the rejection of the moral point of view altogether appears disempowering. How can feminist moral critique operate without reliance on a moral point of view which can command assent authoritatively? How can a feminist moral theory replace entirely the positive power of autonomy with the negative passivity of the heteronomous determination of moral agency and still sustain a transformative politics?

Possible answers to these questions can be found in one example of feminist moral theory which, I will argue, follows Hegel's path further and more consistently than either Porter or Diprose in rejecting the moral point of view, which is the work of Margaret Urban Walker (Urban Walker, 1998). Urban Walker does not look to Hegel as a resource for either the setting up or resolving of the problem of articulating a feminist account of moral agency and judgement, and more broadly establishing the scope and limitations of a feminist moral theory. Instead, her argument proceeds by following through the internal logic (or way of despair) of the feminist critique of mainstream moral theory, specifically in relation to the critique of abstraction and

universality traditionally seen to inhere within the moral point of view. What emerges, however, is an account of moral subjectivity and agency premised on the inseparability of morality from ethical life and of the possibilities of moral judgement (critical and prescriptive), which is powerfully reminiscent of the Hegelian account and which in rejecting the moral point of view nevertheless suggests that morality may be revived as ethics.

Like Hegel, Urban Walker argues that moral subjectivity and agency can only be understood in terms of the ethical life of which they form a part. As both agents and moral judges we are produced through the complex of values, practices, relations and institutions which sustain collective existence (Urban Walker, 1998: 14–18; 203). Like Hegel also, Urban Walker stresses that the political is intrinsic to the ethical, in the sense that moral agency, moral judgement and the ways in which they are theorized are produced by but also reinforce institutionalized relations of power and status (Urban Walker, 1998: 29–46). When it comes to the nature and conditions of ethical judgement, Urban Walker's understanding of ethical life entails the abandonment of individual authoritative access to criteria of moral truth. Instead, moral judgement is either already authoritative within existing forms of ethical life and therefore in effect, if not immediately self-evident, certainly potentially evident to reflective participants, or it has to be built collaboratively (Urban Walker, 1998: 221–3). Crucial to Urban Walker's account, as with the ethics of care, is the reliance of the authority and credibility of ethical claims on their meaningfulness within specific contexts. That meaning is not carried transcendentally, it is this-worldly and where it does not exist within a particular context as an aspect of shared reality then ethical judgement based on it is not authoritative but purely coercive (Urban Walker, 1998: 202).

Having rejected the individual location of the moral point of view, Urban Walker's emphasis is on the complex and constructed character of forms of ethical life and the ways in which particular patterns of responsibility and dependence inhere within those forms. These are patterns which have a history. They involve assumptions about moral identity and value, and the question of their necessity is crucial to debates about the legitimacy or otherwise of the obligations and practices with which they are bound up. 'I suggest we have an urgent need for *geographies of responsibility*, mapping the structure of standing assumptions that guides the distribution of responsibilities – how they are assigned, negotiated, deflected – in particular forms of moral life' (Urban Walker, 1998: 99). In making judgements about moral

questions, traditionally the moral theorist has been concerned to discriminate between necessary and contingent identities and values in order to work out what carries moral weight. Urban Walker changes the debate by starting from the premise of contingency and asking that the crucial question not be how we know what is ethically necessary, but how certain values or practices come to be seen or experienced as ethically necessary. The point is not to establish in advance what is to count as moral, but to gain a deeper knowledge of the 'forms of moral life'. This deeper knowledge does not take any manifestation of moral values and relations as simply given, but looks at how it has come to be and, crucially, at how interests are constructed and served by the 'bedrock' character of any particular moral practice. For Urban Walker, the 'seeing' of the moral theorist necessarily involves accepting the contingency of one's own 'bedrock' as well as that of others (Urban Walker, 1998: 223). Precisely because moral values and practices are inseparable from the broader social and political context within which they operate, both morality and moral theory are never entirely divorced from power. Urban Walker's account of ethical significance and ethical judgement would seem to imply that ethical prescription is no longer the concern of the moral theorist. However, this is not her conclusion. She suggests instead that the work of the moral theorist is prescriptive generally in so far as it challenges any claim that certain moral values or practices are inherently unquestionable. More specifically, she argues for the reflective articulation of ethical prescriptions which acknowledge the conditions of their own meaningfulness and therefore are more likely to become intelligible and persuasive to others.

We can be better or worse justified in our own moral beliefs, and we *can* make justified judgements on others' moral practices and beliefs. What we *can't* do is assume that our judgements ought to have *authority* for them, much less that it is a test of our or anybody else's moral beliefs that they achieve *universal* authority. (Urban Walker, 1998: 208)

Conclusion

The claims of feminist moral theory go deeper than the already strong (if prescriptively neutral) claim that moral values and practices are embedded in ethical life. They also assert that ethical life is constructed not given, and that gendered relations of power form a significant part of it. By doing this they institutionalize an orientation of 'suspicion'

towards any moral values and practices which present themselves as given because tied to some kind of essential identity, including sexed or gendered identities. This suspicion, however, is not grounded in an abstracted moral point of view, but is made possible by the developments in ethical life which Hegel saw as distinctive of his own age. Ethicists of care and many feminist critics of the ethics of care (both those who return feminist ethics to the moral point of view of justice and those who seek an alternative to both care and justice such as Porter and Diprose) ultimately tend to fall back on reinventing the moral point of view in an effort to resurrect the idea of authoritative moral judgement for feminism. To abandon the illusion of the 'moral point of view' appears to run the risk of abandoning the possibility of normative critique for feminists. In response to this concern, I would suggest that the kind of approach to feminist ethics I am arguing for here is actually more empowering than one which relies on some version of a moral point of view. The latter, as exemplified by the either/or alternatives of justice versus care and the reflections of that either/or in the attempts of Porter and Diprose to transcend those alternatives, become locked into a theoretical debate which is irresolvable. The preoccupation with avoiding essentialism on the one hand, and enabling critique on the other, in practice tends to militate against feminist moral philosophers taking the risks of judgement. In contrast, if one follows the approach exemplified by Urban Walker and, I have argued, implied by Hegel, in so far as any moral theorist articulates ethical prescriptions, he or she must take responsibility for also articulating the conditions within which those prescriptions are meaningful and therefore the kind of world which they imply. Acknowledging that judgement is a risky business, and being honest about its partiality, enables judgement to be oriented to the present and future rather than to preoccupation with its anterior conditions. The meaningfulness of moral judgement and prescription is not in the hands of the moral judge, but in the degree to which the judgement speaks to the experience of the audience to which the judgement is addressed.

Urban Walker's work offers, I suggest, the kind of account of morality and of moral philosophy which is implied by both Hegel's and feminist moral theory's critique of the moral point of view. She commits feminist moral theory to a deeply phenomenological project. As with Hegel's work, however, this phenomenology is not passively descriptive in so far as its task is to follow through the way of despair. In the context of moral theory this means that part of its task is to trace the fissures and the relations of power within existing moral

values and practices, and to work always on the presumption that no moral value or practice is given necessarily and ahistorically in a '*world beyond* which exists God knows where' (Hegel, 1991: 20). According to this kind of feminist moral theory, the nature and conditions of ethical judgement are inseparable from the moral forms of life within which they are embedded. This has specific consequences for the authority carried by such judgements which draw attention to the crucial importance of conditions of intelligibility within the sphere of ethics. Moral judgements make sense within contexts; the intelligibility of those judgements is straightforward when a context is shared but becomes a challenge when contexts are not shared or are partially shared (within and between different forms of ethical life). The guarantees of the meaningfulness of moral claims are not to be found in reason in abstraction from ethical life. This means that persuasion of others rests not on rational argument as such, but on either having or putting the conditions in place within which arguments will be understood as rational. This latter point serves as a reminder both of the fundamentally political nature of feminism's project and the fact that no radical changes are accomplished easily and without cost. The 'moral point of view' holds out the false promise of a universally recognizable authority grounded in the moral law or in individual conscience. Feminist and Hegelian ethics hold out only the promise and the difficulty which are already inherent within ethical life.

Hegel and the Sexual Contract

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that the rejection of the moral point of view which is characteristic of certain kinds of feminist moral theory, and also of Hegel's philosophy, inevitably pushes moral philosophy into the task of understanding the links between accounts of moral agency and judgement and the broader terrain of ethical life. In particular, I suggested that the recognition of the lack of fit between the myth of moral autonomy and the actuality of dependence and inequality was crucial to the development of a feminist moral theory which did not seek to reinvent a moral point of view, and could be part of challenging the conditions which made such a viewpoint possible. This suggests that feminist moral philosophy becomes in practice an aspect of feminist political philosophy, with the latter being focused both on the understanding of the power relations in and through which women's position is currently constituted *and* on the question of how that position might be reformed and transformed. Within this chapter, the focus will be on feminist political thought which has been formulated specifically in response to women's position within the modern liberal state. Following Pateman, I will take the term 'sexual contract' as a shorthand for the ways in which women are systematically subordinated and disadvantaged within the apparently equal legal, civil and political relations of that state (Pateman, 1988). On Pateman's analysis the sexual contract is an inherent part of the 'social contract', that is to say of the claim that the liberal state derives its legitimacy essentially from the free consent of sovereign, possessive individuals. The argument of this chapter, as with the

previous one, will be that Hegel's political thought may be used to enrich and develop contemporary feminist analysis of the sexual contract and arguments as to how it might best be resisted or reconstructed. This is not to suggest that Hegel is any kind of feminist; it is quite clear, as has been pointed out in previous chapters, that even in the light of his own day Hegel was conservative in his views about women's nature and role (Benhabib, 1996a). Nevertheless, I will argue that the insights into modern legal, civil and political relations expressed in Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* work to expose and potentially to undermine the mechanisms by which women are differentially (unequally) incorporated into the body of citizens within the liberal state. This makes Hegel, paradoxically, an ally of feminist political theorists seeking to establish the constraints and possibilities for women's social and political agency within the socio/political relations and institutions of liberal modernity.

The first section of the chapter will examine and assess the work of two of the theorists who have argued most powerfully for the constitutive role of the sexual contract in the liberal state: Carole Pateman and Catharine MacKinnon (Pateman, 1988; MacKinnon, 1989; 1993). It will be suggested that, although much of the argument of both thinkers is persuasive, the power of both of their analyses is limited by tensions internal to their account of the constraints and possibilities inherent in the situation of women within the liberal state. There is a tendency to treat the terms of the sexual and the social contracts as fixed, and thereby to treat women as always already victims of modern legal, civil and political relations. This tendency is in persistent tension with Pateman's and MacKinnon's own (intermittent) recognition of both the mutually constitutive relation of sexual and social contracts and the ambivalent implications of this relation for feminist politics. In the second section, Pateman's critique of Hegel as another proponent of the sexual contract will pave the way for an examination and assessment of Hegel's account of the place of women within the modern state. This will be interpreted as an account in which, as part of a broader argument about the nature of contractual legitimation in modern legality, morality, economy and politics, the sexual contract is consistently presented as both constitutive of and constituted by the social contract. It will be argued that Hegel's appreciation of the complexity and dynamism inherent in the conditions of possibility of the sexual contract as a dimension of the social contract (and vice versa) indicates significant common ground between Hegel and the feminist theorists. In Hegel's case, however, this analysis offers a stronger sense of the complexity of the

conditions of possibility and implications of the principle of abstract right crucial to the modern state. It will also be suggested that Hegel's work provides resources for the argument, implicit in aspects of the claims of Pateman and MacKinnon, that the ambivalence of women's legal, civil and political status is the key resource for political strategies for resisting and rewriting the terms of the sexual contract (and thereby necessarily of the social contract). The third section of the chapter will attempt to flesh out the nature and implications of a Hegelian feminist political philosophy by returning to the feminist debates over citizenship outlined in chapter 1.

6.1 Modern Patriarchy

Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* and MacKinnon's *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* were both published at the end of the 1980s, and present similar arguments as to the significance of the unequal position of women within the contemporary liberal state. In both cases, the claim is made that the ways in which women are disadvantaged in the liberal state are not simply unfortunate carry-overs from earlier status hierarchies which are in conflict with liberalism and which liberalism will overcome in time. Instead, it is argued that the subordination of women as women is a crucial premise of the ways in which liberal legal, civil and political relations are legitimated and institutionalized. In both cases also the analysis is both linked to and differentiated from Marxist arguments. Pateman's argument clearly owes something to Macpherson's Marxist argument that the classic social contract stories rely on a conception of the individual as self-owning (the 'possessive individual'). This conception of the individual as owning and being able to alienate their own physical capacities, as well as external property, is argued by Macpherson to be embedded in emergent capitalist market relations in the seventeenth century. It is part of a liberal ideology which actively disguises real inequalities between bourgeoisie and wage-labourers by counting all individuals as equal in terms of their possession of property in the person (Macpherson, 1962). Pateman takes up the idea of the identity of the liberal individual as a self-owner, but argues that there are features peculiar to the implications of property in the person for women which are not captured by Marxist analysis (Pateman, 1988: 13–15; 55). MacKinnon draws on Marxist notions of oppression/exploitation, class and ideology, but argues that Marxist critiques of the liberal state lack an adequate explanation for or challenge to relations of

power grounded in claims about natural sexual difference (MacKinnon, 1989: 13–80).

Pateman's argument is that the story of the social contract in classical social contract theory (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau) is the story of the overthrow of *paternal* and the institution of *fraternal* political right.¹ Hidden within this story, however, is another plot, largely ignored by mainstream commentators on the classic texts, in which conjugal right (the other branch of traditional patriarchy – essentially the rights of men over women) is reconstructed as a specifically modern form of patriarchy. According to Pateman's account, the social contract presupposes a sexual contract, which is essentially a contract which constitutes relations of domination and subordination between the sexes through establishing men's rights over women's property in the person. The nature of the sexual contract is disguised but retrievable, in the arguments of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, and Pateman argues that it is based on force. She establishes this partly through an examination of Hobbes's state of nature and the disappearance of women as equal individuals within it. According to Pateman, the acknowledgement of female-right at the beginning of Hobbes's story of the state of nature has been withdrawn by the time the point of the social contract is reached (Pateman, 1988: 43–50). She argues that this needs explaining, and postulates a missing part of the story in which women are either forcibly subjugated or consent to subjugation in return for protection. In either scenario, Pateman argues that if we follow the logic of Hobbes's assumptions then force must be the key to women's disappearance as equal parties in natural right. In Hobbes's terms the desire to consent to subordination for protection is only explicable through the threat of force. This argument is supported both through reference to the collapse of the distinction between liberty and necessity in Hobbes's account of choice and through a re-reading of Freud's account of the origins of civilization in patricide (Pateman, 1988: 103–15).

At the heart of Pateman's argument is the claim that the sovereign individual who replaces the sovereign patriarch as the origin and legitimizer of modern legal, civil and political relations is in fact a person of the male sex, standardly understood as a property-owner and head of household (and therefore significantly excluding many categories of men as well as women and children). The work of both Locke and Rousseau is used to substantiate this claim. In Locke's case it is the glossing of the distinction between conjugal and paternal right as aspects of traditional patriarchy which is seen to ground a modern form of patriarchy in which women are subordinated

through contract, so that they both are and are not sovereign individuals (Pateman, 1988: 91). In Rousseau's case, his explicit exclusion of women from the public realm in *Emile* is used to confirm the view that women do not participate in the social contract and are confined both to the private sphere politically and to an inferior moral realm (Pateman, 1988: 96–102).

Pateman claims that the stories told in classical social contract theory capture ongoing truths about the nature of the modern liberal state, in which the sovereign individuality of men is linked to the denial of that status to women. Fundamental to her account is the argument that the prerequisite of modern legal, civil and political relations is the fiction of the individual as owner of property in the person. The sovereign will or consent of this individual is the source of legitimacy of relations and institutions which make up both state and civil society. Women both have and do not have the status of possessive individuals. They find themselves in a position in which their sovereign will is always already subject, in which what is inherently inalienable has been alienated and in which 'no' can mean 'yes'. To the extent to which women are not granted the fictional status of owners of property in the person (because that property has already been ceded to men), women are inevitably second-class citizens who find themselves in an unequal position as contracting parties in a range of contexts – in particular those in which alienation of property in the person is at stake. Pateman argues that employment, marriage, prostitution and surrogacy contracts in contemporary Western societies all demonstrate that the story she has told of the social/sexual contract is reflected in women's actual position.

In Pateman's analysis it is not wholly clear whether she is arguing that the sexual contract is a necessary prerequisite of the social contract. There are suggestions in her argument that the reconstitution of the power of men over women in modernity is what in itself enables the emergence of men (or at least some men) as sovereign individuals capable of generating (giving birth to) a new political order. It may be that the fiction of property in the person is psychologically sustained by the effective control over women's bodies which the bourgeois heads of household presume prior to contracting to leave the state of nature. This is certainly something which is claimed by MacKinnon, who characterizes the position of women in the liberal state very similarly to Pateman, but with a much stronger insistence on the dependence of the sovereign individuality of men on their subjugation of women at the level of subjectivity and self-identity, as well as institutionally (MacKinnon, 1989: 128). MacKinnon's analysis, in

contrast to Pateman's, is entirely confined to the present, it relies on an argument for understanding sexuality as 'the dynamic of sex as social hierarchy' and as central to the oppression of women independent of other sorts of hierarchy. MacKinnon argues that regardless of the origins of the ways in which sexuality is understood and lived in contemporary societies, it is clear that the dominant epistemology and ontology of sexuality serves the interests of men and systematically subordinates women (MacKinnon, 1989: 83–125). MacKinnon treats sex as analogous to class, in the sense that she presents state, civil society and the private sphere as constructed by and institutionalizing norms and practices which reflect a masculinist point of view and interest as opposed to the viewpoint and interest of women (MacKinnon, 1989: 160–2).

MacKinnon substantiates her argument with reference to the way issues relating to sexuality are treated under law. According to MacKinnon, the meaning of equality of right within the liberal state is actually equality of right for men. Women are perpetually trapped in a position in which in order to protect themselves they must either identify themselves with men or accept 'special' treatment as members of the denigrated sex. This is why, MacKinnon claims, the use of the state to redress women's inequality has been limited in its success, since it is only in so far as women are like men that they can either claim or benefit from their recognition as equal citizens. This means, paradoxically, that it is those women who have suffered least from the sexist nature of the liberal state who are most likely to gain recognition for being discriminated against, since they are most likely to be able to claim a relevant comparison with male counterparts (MacKinnon, 1989: 192). MacKinnon points out how the state's regulation of sexual harassment, pornography, prostitution, reproductive technology and abortion is never brought under sex-equality legislation but is always dealt with otherwise:

It is as if a vacuum boundary demarcates sexual issues on the one hand from the law of equality on the other. Law, structurally, adopts the male point of view: sexuality concerns nature not social arbitrariness, interpersonal relations not social distributions of power, the sex difference not sex discrimination. (MacKinnon, 1989: 216)

In noting that sexuality concerns 'nature', MacKinnon is pointing to a crucial element in hers and Pateman's indictment of the liberal state. While the legitimacy of political power, property ownership and market relations rests on free consent, which is to say the fundamentally

artificial power of the sovereign will of individuals, the legitimacy of contracts in which women's property in the person is at stake continues to be implicitly grounded in nature as much as or instead of will. More recently, MacKinnon has extended her argument to the realm of international law by pointing out how the ambivalence of women's status within the liberal state is reproduced in discourses of human rights, which are caught in the same logic as rights thinking within the state (MacKinnon, 1993).

If you are hurt as a member of a group, the odds that the group will be considered human are improved if it includes men. Under guarantees of international human rights, as well as in everyday life, a woman is 'not yet a name for a way of being human'. (MacKinnon, 1993: 91)

MacKinnon's focus is on the systematic and institutionalized power differential between men and women in modernity, and the ways in which this results in women persistently failing to qualify as fully fledged human beings in terms of their effective protection under state and international law. MacKinnon makes the argument in relation to women as bearers of international rights by focusing on the lack of fit between the ideology of human rights and the actuality of women's position. MacKinnon argues that there are two major influences on rights ideology in the international context. First, the original understanding of the 'rights of man' as it emerged in Western legal and political theory, originating in Aristotle's principle of justice as meaning to treat the like alike; second, the experience of the Nazi holocaust and genocide as the definitive example of the violation of human rights on grounds of particular difference in the modern period (MacKinnon, 1993: 95–9).

According to MacKinnon, to treat equals equally in Aristotle's terms is to treat them as being the same. This notion of equality as sameness is then carried over as the understanding of who counts in the class of equals and is massively extended in the modern period, even to the point when women are included and slavery is abolished. Thus, in the language of 'natural' rights, the 'rights of man' or, in the post-1945 period, 'human rights', what remains constant is the understanding that in being bearers of equal rights all human beings are essentially the same. In other words, any differences between them are morally irrelevant. This has specific consequences for women as rights bearers in two interrelated respects. First, what it means to be the same, according to MacKinnon, is defined in terms which fit certain categories of men and which therefore necessarily excludes or

marginalizes women in practice. Second, it frequently turns out that women are not actually included in the category of the 'same' after all, in theory or in practice. The first phenomenon is exemplified by instances standardly pointed out by feminist critics of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights such as the identification of human with head of household, property-owner, wage-earner or independent discrete (which is to say, not pregnant) individual (Peterson, 1990). This means that for those humans who don't fit into this mould, the working assumption is always that these differences, being morally irrelevant, do not require recognition. The second phenomenon is demonstrated by the lack of rights over their bodily integrity which is commonplace for women. The everyday abuse suffered by women in terms of sexual assault and domestic violence indicates how, in practice, women are routinely seen as 'less than human'. Both of these phenomena, argues MacKinnon, reflect the reality of women's subordinate civil and political status within modern states and the international community. This is a subordination which is masked by state endorsement of the idea of universal rights, but which has its roots not in the state and international law as such but in patriarchy, a system of subordination in which men have power over women (MacKinnon, 1993: 85–6).

The second major influence on women's exclusion from the category of human in human rights discourse, according to MacKinnon, relates not to the generic nature of the category of humanity but to the one particular, collective identity which has been recognized as of supreme importance in the history of the violation of human rights, that of race or ethnicity. MacKinnon argues that the Nazi genocide, in powerfully influencing the ethical sensibilities of those who went on to formulate human rights discourse in the post-1945 period, effectively reinforced the blindspot towards women already incorporated into generic human rights discourse. The latter set up the positive understanding that rights are given in virtue of humanity; the former set up the understanding that the paradigmatic violation of human rights is for people to be killed or hurt, not because they are a male or female human individual but because they have a particular ethnic or racial identity. According to MacKinnon, what became clear in the light of the systematic rape of women in the wars in Bosnia in the mid-1990s was that the ambiguities of women's status were obvious not only in explicitly patriarchal cultures, not only within modern liberal states and nationalisms, but also within the international sphere among those observing, recording and judging these events with the standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in mind.

The assumptions of both those perpetrating systematic rape campaigns and of international law were that women could be identified as instrumental in the violation of an ethnic collectivity, as bearers of the next generation of that collectivity. The inclusion of rape under charges of genocide reproduces the sexual contract in which the genetic inheritance of the man overrides the genetic inheritance of the woman. This means that women become identified as passive vessels of ethnic identity in a way incompatible with the equality of right they are supposed to be accorded (MacKinnon, 1993: 88–91; Hutchings, 2000b).

Pateman and MacKinnon both highlight the ongoing political importance of sexual difference within the modern liberal state. Unsurprisingly, therefore, both Pateman's and MacKinnon's arguments are targeted by feminist critics who want to argue for compatibility between liberal universalism and feminism. For liberal (justice) feminists, arguing from a rationalist and universalist perspective, Pateman and MacKinnon are seen as essentializing women's position in such a way as to risk excluding them in principle from entitlement to equality of right. This means that feminist politics cannot be enrolled under the banner of enlightenment visions of universal emancipation and suggests that there is an inherent bar to the transformation of women's position within the liberal state (Green, 1995: 50–1). For postmodernist feminists the charge of essentialism is also important. It is claimed that Pateman and MacKinnon, like ethicists of care, treat female subjectivity as fixed and that therefore neither thinker pays sufficient attention to the salience of differences between women in thinking about feminist politics. In place of either equal rights or sex-differentiated treatment as the goal of feminist political engagement, postmodernist feminists argue for a radical pluralism in politics. From the point of view of liberal and postmodernist arguments, the problem with the work of Pateman and MacKinnon is that it fixes women's position in the modern liberal state within comprehensive relations of subordination which thereby relegate women to the position of the eternal victim (Cornell, 1993: 128–46). I will suggest that to the extent that these charges are justified they draw attention to a significant tension within both Pateman's and MacKinnon's argument. This tension manifests itself in rather different ways in the work of the two theorists, but in both cases it is a tension between on the one hand an account of the meaning of the sexual contract as fixed and unchallengeable within its own terms; and on the other hand an account of the meaning of the sexual contract as highly ambivalent and offering scope for its own reconstruction.

In Pateman's closing chapters on the marriage, prostitution and surrogacy contracts, women always appear as the victims of modern patriarchy (Pateman, 1988: 116–218). This lays Pateman's work open to the charge made above, that she essentializes women's position as one in which women's subjectivity is always already unambiguously subordinated, regardless of differences or inequalities between different women or between women and men within the modern state. There are grounds for this reading in Pateman's account, but there are other elements of her argument which suggest a more subtle analysis. Both in her acknowledgement of the role of other subordinated players in the social contract story (children, animals, non-Western peoples, slaves, wage labourers) and in her insistence on the ambivalence of women's relation to contract, Pateman opens up the possibility of gender as one among several disguised relations of power upon which the liberal state is premised, but which it cannot legitimate in its own terms. This is not however followed through in Pateman's assessment of the possibilities of social and political agency open to women as both sovereign and subordinated subjects; there is a strong sense in Pateman's account of actual contracts that the position of all women is peculiarly fixed and unalterable. The alternative to contract is specified in far too abstract and utopian a way to offer much hope of change (Pateman, 1988: 218–34; Diprose, 1994: 9).

MacKinnon's reading of sexual difference in terms of a fixed relation of domination and subordination is more clear-cut than Pateman's. Whereas Pateman, at least in part of her analysis, emphasizes the extent to which women both are and are not sovereign individuals, MacKinnon consistently asserts that the sovereign individual is male and cannot be female except in so far as females can become male identified. Much of her argument consists in the relentless demonstration of how this means that women are trapped into living their lives from a male (oppressive) point of view. Despite the grimness of this vision, however, MacKinnon, unlike Pateman, suggests a feminist way out of this trap, a way which relies on consciousness-raising and uses law. Consciousness-raising is the means by which women, collectively, can become aware of the dominance of the masculinist point of view in the ways in which both men and women live as sexed beings (MacKinnon, 1989: 83–105). On the basis of a raised consciousness, women become able to see that a variety of practices which are said to be grounded and legitimated in terms of natural sexual difference are actually forms of discrimination against women as a sex. Once this is perceived then it becomes possible to utilize the ideals of equality inherent in sex-equality legislation to challenge the

dominant interpretations of what those ideals mean. In commenting on the argument of her book in the Preface, MacKinnon says:

It does not advance a critique of 'rights' per se but of their form and content as male, hence exclusionary and limited and limiting. It is one thing for upper-class white men to repudiate rights as intrinsically liberal and individualistic and useless and alienating; they have them in fact even as they purport to relinquish them in theory. It is another to reformulate the relation between life and law on the basis of the experience of the subordinated, the disadvantaged, the dispossessed, the silenced – in other words, to create a jurisprudence of change. (MacKinnon, 1989: xiii–xiv)

Pateman's and MacKinnon's analyses appear to have complementary emphases. Pateman's account of the patriarchal trap of sovereign individuality is that it is radically ambivalent in its implications; MacKinnon's is that it is unambiguously oppressive of women. For Pateman, a way out is only possible through the positing of a radically other form of civil and political relation than that implicit in the sexual/social contract which offers only the stark choice between subordinated subjectivity and sovereign individuality; MacKinnon, on the other hand, suggests that there is sufficient flexibility in the principle of equality of right implicit in liberal legality for it to offer the possibility of a reconstitution of the sexual contract through a jurisprudence of change. In both cases it is unclear how the two aspects of the argument are made consistent – how is it possible to claim both that the sexual/social contract is unambiguously and irrevocably oppressive of women and that it isn't? How is it possible to see law as the institutionalization of masculine oppression and yet also as the lever for change? It is in relation to these questions, I want to argue, that a turn to Hegel's analysis of sexual difference in the modern state can offer some illumination.

6.2 Beyond the Sexual Contract

For Pateman, Hegel, even though he is a critic of classical social contract theory, nevertheless endorses the sexual contract in the sense that in his philosophy of right he reflects and does not question the ambivalent status of women in the modern state as simultaneously free and subject (Pateman, 1996: 209–23). Particularly important for Pateman's argument that Hegel relegates women to the status of second-class citizens is Hegel's treatment of marriage within *Elements*

of the *Philosophy of Right*. This, it is claimed, is the familiar territory of the sexual contract in which women's actual subordination is disguised by women's apparent equality as free personalities capable of contracting into marriage. Pateman points out how Hegel stresses the significance of the separate, free consent of the partners to a marriage, while clearly accepting a systematic inequality of power and status between men and women in the sexual division of labour which marriage institutionalizes (Pateman, 1996: 217–18). As Pateman acknowledges, however, Hegel's insistence on the importance of free and articulated consent to marriage is accompanied by his equal insistence that marriage should not be understood as a contract. He is highly critical of Kant's account of marriage as a contract for the mutual exclusive use of one another's persons as things (essentially an agreement to the exchange of sexual services) and claims that this is to misrepresent the ethical character of marriage (Hegel, 1991: 200–8; Pateman, 1996: 200–8). It appears therefore as if women both are and are not consenting individuals and that marriage both is and is not a contract on Hegel's account.

In previous chapters it has been argued that *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* should not be read as a standard prescriptive exercise in normative political theory. Hegel claims explicitly in his Preface that he is writing not prescriptively but phenomenologically, that is to say he is attempting to articulate the immanent logic of the normative principles inherent in the emerging modern state (Hegel, 1991: 20–3). This articulation clearly involves the critique of other accounts of legality, morality, family, civil society and the state. However, as with Hegel's critique of the moral point of view discussed in chapter 5, this critique is directed at the substantive claims being made (e.g., by Kant about the nature of marriage and the family) not on the grounds that such claims are straightforwardly transhistorically false, but on the grounds that they demonstrate an inadequate understanding of their own conditions of possibility and their validity is therefore partial at best. Hegel's targets in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* notably include Kant and Fichte, as well as the classical social contract theorists. When he objects to some aspect of any of these thinkers' analyses, he invariably calls attention to their neglect of the way in which any given element of legal, moral, social and political existence is constitutive of and constituted by any other within the complex network of relations and institutions which Hegel terms 'ethical life'.

Feminist readers such as Pateman, reading Hegel as a prescriptive normative theorist, find themselves caught between *approval* of his

critique of abstract right, of classical social contract theory and of Kantian moralism, and *condemnation* of his relegation of women to the sphere of marriage and the family. This kind of double response in much feminist engagement with Hegel's work has been apparent throughout this book. Again and again feminist critics are confronted with the fact that Hegel seems wilfully to neglect his own insights when it comes to his treatment of women (Benhabib, 1996a; and see chapter 4). However, if one takes seriously Hegel's own claim not to be engaged in prescription, then it is by no means obvious that all of the seeming inconsistencies and contradictions of Hegel's accounts of women and marriage in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* originate in Hegel's wilful prejudice. An argument can be made that many of these inconsistencies and contradictions actually inhere in the social and political reality which Hegel is analysing. When this turn is taken, attention shifts from exposing Hegel's particular prejudices to exposing and expounding the complex, contradictory and dynamic nature of a social and political reality which both conditions and is conditioned by principles of abstract right premised on a notion of free, discrete individuality. This is a reality which is played out in a variety of contexts including within the private sphere, in relation to the specific position of women and in marriage and the family.²

In *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel is dismissive in turn of identifying marriage with relations of nature, contract or romantic love, the three most popular alternatives for understanding the meaning of marriage in his time (Hegel, 1991: 201). This is not to say that he dismisses sex, free consent or romance as elements of marriage; they are all significant, but none of them captures what marriage is in its essence. In all cases, according to Hegel, the reason for the inadequacy of these accounts has to do with the incompatibility between an institution which is premised on the abandonment of the particular will of its participants, and feelings and behaviours which are inherently particular in the modern sense of being the products of a contingent, sovereign will. Marriage is not sustained by contingent will but by its surrender. To reduce marriage to sex, to mutual gain or to love is to misunderstand the lack of individual freedom in marriage. This is a lack of freedom which is understood as a constituent part of a broader reality (ethical life) within which, paradoxically, free individuality is itself produced and reproduced. Desire, consent and love are lived within the modern state, civil society and the private sphere as effects of the constitutive fiction of modernity, that is, that the range of human experience and interaction can be understood in terms of

free, discrete individuality. But desire, consent and love can only be lived as effects of free individuality in so far as free individuality is sustained and institutionalized through actual relations of dependency which are always also relations of power. In other words, this is the classical Marxist and feminist insight, which is also clearly evident in the texts of social contract theory, that sovereign individuals need property, servants and wives. At the same time, however, those relations of dependency are themselves reconstituted by the effective power of the fiction of sovereign individuality which they sustain. Dependency does not disappear, but it can be and is reformed with differential advantages and disadvantages for the participants in relations of love as much as of commerce or politics.

Moreover, relations of love, of commerce and of politics are not themselves neatly separable in so far as the principle of free individuality is commonly at work within modern state and society. In Pateman's argument concerning the sexual contract a great deal hangs on the separation of paternal from conjugal right in the constitution of specifically modern relations of patriarchy. She argues that the sexual contract must be understood as one between men and women aside from their role as parents, since modern patriarchy is about the control of men over women, not the control of fathers over sons or, more generally, parents over children. Hegel's analysis, however, points to the impossibility of separating accounts of conjugal right from the broader terrain not only of the family, but civil society and the state as well. Marriage is made possible through the existence of its participants prior to marriage as free particular wills. These wills in turn are premised on fictions peculiar to legality and morality in modernity, fictions which are able to be sustained and to flourish (but which are also undercut) by the ethical life of the family in which relations of care, as Hegel is careful to point out, co-exist with relations of power and property. The sexual contract is itself conditioned by and conditions a range of other relations, some of which depend on the presumption of sovereign individuality and some of which do not. These are relations which are both mutually perpetuating and the source of conflict, contradiction and change. In her discussion of Hegel and the sexual contract Pateman points to the ways in which Hegel displays the non-contractual presuppositions of contract. She argues, however, that his own treatment of marriage, in combining an assumption of women's natural inferiority with an identification of women prior to marriage as particular contingent wills, repeats the moves of classical social contract theory, confirming the ambivalent status of women as formally equal and naturally

subordinate within the modern state (Pateman, 1996: 217–23). Pateman's account of Hegel is, I would argue, partially true in the sense that Hegel does indeed make clear the dependence of sovereign individuality upon non-free relations and a sexual division of labour within the private sphere. But it is partial for two reasons: first, because, regardless of whether he approved of the institution of marriage or not, Hegel is describing a historically specific institution which at this particular point is changing into one which mediates between the principle of free individuality and the conditions necessary to produce it; second, because the role of the sexual contract in Hegel's account is one significant thread in a set of presuppositions and consequences of the institutionalization of free individuality as the crucial principle of modern legal, civil and political, but also personal relations. The co-existence of freedom and subordination is not confined to the status of women, rather the position of women exemplifies powerfully a situation which is pervasive and also, like the institution of marriage as Hegel points out, inherently unstable (Hegel, 1991: 213–14; Rose, 1992: 184–5).

However, even if one accepts the above reading of Hegel as offering a phenomenology of the operations of the sexual contract rather than necessarily an endorsement of it, it isn't clear how this is helpful to contemporary feminist analysis which is looking to challenge and not only to describe the ways in which women are systematically subordinated within the liberal state. Whatever else is the case, it is clear that Hegel himself was not concerned to challenge women's role in stabilizing and enabling modern social and political relations through their own exclusion from full recognition as consenting individuals. How can Hegel be an ally of Pateman and MacKinnon in their efforts to move beyond the terms of the sexual contract as it currently exists? The answer to this is twofold: first, Hegel's analysis of women's nature and position, throughout his work, consistently draws attention to the faultlines in human self-understanding which precipitate social and political change. MacKinnon's argument that feminist consciousness-raising provides a key to feminist politics carries obvious echoes of Marx, but it was to Hegel that Marx owed the idea that a lack of fit between experienced reality and normative self-understanding could be a trigger for the development of political agency (Gauthier, 1999). Second, and more significantly, however, Hegel makes clear in his analysis of modern social and political relations that the link between lived experience and the normative principles through which it is supposed to make sense is not straightforward, but complexly mutually constitutive in ways which generate

unpredictable and unstable consequences. Normative principles, most notably the fictions of free individuality which appear variously in the forms of legal personality, moral conscience, romantic love and market relations in Hegel's account of the philosophy of right, do not simply clash with a reality of dependence and inequality, they transform it and are themselves transformed by it. It is only with this kind of understanding of the link between what MacKinnon refers to as formal and substantive dimensions of the range of legal, civil and political relations that her own proposal to use the law to extend the substantive rights and freedoms of women can make sense. The hiatus and lack of fit between the sovereign and subordinated elements of subjective and institutional existence for women within the modern state opens up grounds upon which women's subordination can be challenged. But the weapons with which that challenge is fought are forged out of that same complex and contradictory actuality.

6.3 Towards a Hegelian Feminist Ethical Theory

The idea of locating transformative potential for feminist politics within existing social, economic and political relations works in opposition to an important strain of thought within feminism. This has been articulated particularly powerfully in the work of Audre Lorde:

For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. (Lorde, 1992)

For many sexual difference and postmodernist feminisms it is the above argument which undermines the claims of rationalist and critical feminists to a genuinely transformative politics. In relying either on universally available norms or the immanent potentiality of history as the mechanism for or condition of change, a kind of conservatism is seen to creep in, in which women remained trapped in patriarchal frameworks of thought and action. However, I would argue that such views make the same mistake as Pateman and MacKinnon do when they treat the sexual contract as given and immutable. Neither house nor tools are tied to a fixed essence, they are real effects of a world which has been fashioned and is constantly refashioned, though not without struggle and cost. For a Hegelian political theory, if

any struggle or change is possible at all, it is powered through the dynamics inherent in this world (spirit in all of its dimensions), which are never pure or capable of being separated cleanly into a negative or positive dimension. This is also why arguments such as those of Cornell, which accuse MacKinnon in particular of leaving women always in the victim position, are mistaken. Cornell calls for a positive account of the feminine to underpin the idea of a feminist 'jurisprudence of change' and draws on Irigaray's work to offer a different starting point for feminist politics (Cornell, 1993: 129). However, this is to repeat the tendency of feminist moral theory, discussed in the previous chapter, to reinvent the moral point of view. The 'elsewhere' from which feminist politics begins cannot be a radical alterity, as with Butler's account of Antigone's voice, it is always already contaminated (see chapter 4.1 above).

What does it mean to argue, as Pateman, MacKinnon and Hegel do, that women (and not only women) both are and are not sovereign individuals in modern legal, civil and political relations? First, it means that feminist ethics and politics cannot be premised on a straightforward alternative account of subjectivity to that which is premised in sovereign individuality. In so far as familial, economic and political relations presume a particular account of moral and political agency, they also continue to construct it. The centrality of contractual relations to the everyday lives of women continually reproduces us as consenting individuals. To suggest that women cannot be consenting individuals does not make sense in a context in which women have both the will and the capacity to alienate property in the person. Second, however, women both are and are not sovereign individuals because sovereign individuality (in contrast to the account given of it as eternally given and painless in mainstream moral and political theory) is a costly and contradictory thing. It is costly in that it both depends on and perpetuates relations of subordination. The power to contract of one party is always grounded on the exclusion of others from that power, since it presupposes a property that is mine and not yours, and in turn it constitutes relations in which one party acquires power over another. It is contradictory because the sovereign individual is also always subject. Sovereign individuality constructs familial, economic and political relations in a particular way, but it necessarily exists in uneasy relation to materiality, love and need – the relations of dependence which constitute it as other. The moral and political subjectivity of women, along with that of other groups consigned to the 'other' status in modern political theory and practice, is a particularly fruitful ground

for the exploration of the costs and contradictions of sovereign individuality. Precisely in virtue of this, it is also a particularly fruitful ground for political energy directed at change and transformation.

This is, I think, evident in Hegel's own analyses of women's position, both in the discussion of the *Antigone* story in the *Phenomenology* and in his account of women in his philosophy of right. We are told on the one hand that women represent the 'everlasting irony' of the community and, on the other hand, that they are to be compared to plants (in contrast to men as animals). Hegel consistently identifies women's role within the life of spirit with two different kinds of principle: particularity and passivity. Women are identified with particularity in that their ethical priorities are those of the family, the nurturance and preservation of particular others, regardless of the consequences for the polity and the universal ends of government. Women are identified with passivity in that as members of the family they do not act but are acted upon by the external world of civil society and the state – a world which is mediated for them by the male head of household. The two principles of particularity and passivity are in one sense mutually sustaining, in that it is because of their particularity that women take on a passive role in relation to men as denizens of the public realm. They are also, however, as Hegel notes repeatedly, difficult to reconcile with each other whenever the priorities of private and public realms come into conflict. Then the acquiescence to male dominance of plant-like women becomes a subversive challenge to masculine hegemony – a prospect which, it could be argued, is both feared and foreshadowed in Hegel's writings.

If one pursues the Hegelian version of feminist ethical (moral and political) theory for which I have argued in this and the previous chapter, what are the implications for the questions with which feminist political theory has been preoccupied? In order to sketch out a possible answer to this question let us return to the debates over citizenship within feminist political thought which were outlined in chapter 1. These debates were concerned with the limitations of liberal rights based thinking for feminism and with alternative ways of conceiving feminist political agency, drawing on maternalist, deliberative and identity-based models for democratic participation. In relation to rights, feminists have struggled with the question of whether liberalism must be rejected because of the link between rights discourses and the masculinist model of generic humanity (Okin, 1989). In relation to maternalist conceptions of citizenship, feminists have debated the value of care as a model for political practice and its potential dangers (Dietz, 1985; Tronto, 1993). In relation to deliberative democracy,

feminists have returned to questions about the universality of reason in relation to norms, and whether it is possible to accommodate both 'concrete' and 'generalized' recognition of gendered individuals within democratic procedures (Benhabib, 1996b; Young, 1996). In relation to identity, feminist debate has centred on whether women share an identity which could be the basis of collective politics or whether identity must be taken as plural and shifting, implying a politics in which differences between women will be as important as commonalities (Bock and James, 1992; Young, 1990; Mouffe, 1993).

How would a Hegelian feminist political philosophy engage with debates over rights? There are two aspects to the answer to this question. First, a Hegelian feminism would reject the idea of rights as in any sense necessarily grounded in reason or the moral law. Thus, it would not be possible for a Hegelian feminist to resolve debates over individual rights by arguing for their justification *a priori*, in virtue of the identification of women with some capacity which is external to the this-worldly experience of agency. Second, however, in being committed to exploiting the normative resources of contemporary ethical life as a feminist, a Hegelian feminist might well follow MacKinnon in arguing for using rights as an effective way of transforming women's position.

A right to equality, both as a right in itself and as a basis for equal access to other rights, would ground its definition of inequality, and by implication its concept of the human, in the universal – meaning worldwide and everywhere spontaneously indigenous – movement for women's rights. The reality recognized by this movement is generating new principles: new in content, form, reach, operation, and relation to social life. (MacKinnon, 1993: 100)

If one follows MacKinnon's path, no rights are sacrosanct by definition and there is no position from which the feminist political theorist pronounces authoritatively that such-and-such a right should be legislated. Instead, defence of rights claims is linked to strategic judgements about the most effective mechanisms for addressing the experience of subordination and oppression. As argued in the previous chapter, this commits the feminist political theorist to phenomenological rather than prescriptive engagement with the aspects of women's experience with which she is concerned. Any argument for the instantiation of rights within state and international law will be persuasive to the extent that it is recognized to address the political demands or needs of those whom it is intended to benefit. One of the implications of this is that Hegelian feminist political theory is not inherently anti-state;

it does not assume that in principle legal and political rules and institutions are oppressive. For the Hegelian feminist ethicist, the abandonment of rights discourse makes no more sense than the fetishization of rights discourse. The sense which rights discourse makes is always inseparable from the conditions of possibility of judgement of actual or potential rights bearers other than the political theorist.

How would a Hegelian feminism respond to the debate in political theory over maternalist ideals of citizenship? The answer to this question depends on two things: first, the extent to which 'maternal thinking' relies on a fixed (essentialized or idealized) view of women's agency; second, on the extent to which 'maternal thinking' relies on the idea of a feminist 'standpoint' which occupies a privileged ground for judgement *a priori*. The first is rejected because of the Hegelian view that ethical life is an aspect of self-changing spirit and can only be inadequately defined in terms of the one-sided abstraction and valorization of one of its elements. The second is rejected because, from the Hegelian perspective, there is no possibility of occupying a point of authority beyond the complexity of ethical life itself which safeguards the philosopher from the risks of judgement. For the Hegelian feminist the task of the ethical theorist is not in the first instance the task of judgement and ethical prescription, but rather the task of exploring the phenomenology of ethical life. Judgement and prescription depend on relations of identity and non-identity between the philosopher and her audience and the ethical life within which she and her audience are implicated. The difficulty for any particular feminist citizen is less in working out what is right and what should be done, and more in grasping the conditions of possibility for that certainty and its recognition by others, thus laying judgement open to debate and challenge. As with rights discourse, there could be no reason why any of the resources of ethical life should be ruled out in advance as inappropriate to feminist ends. But neither could it be clear *a priori* that certain kinds of developments were the key to political progress.

There is a distinctly Hegelian flavour to the insistence in the work of thinkers such as Ruddick that normative judgement and moral and political action are necessarily grounded in the complexity of practice and context. On the other hand, a Hegelian approach would be obliged to be critical of versions of an ethic of care which ignored the power relations inherent in women's identification with the virtues and practices of care in modern liberal states, since this is an important aspect of the meaning of those virtues and practices. In

summary, Hegelian ethics is descriptive and responsive before it is prescriptive; it entails listening before speaking. When it does 'speak', that is, when any particular feminist engages in judgement and prescription there is no guarantee that other feminists (whether Hegelian or not) would agree on their substantive claims. In contrast, the inevitable partiality of judgement is likely to mean that there will be arguments between feminists occupying different positions within the complexity of contemporary ethical life. This will be increasingly the case depending on the degree of differentiation there is between feminist speakers. Agreement on 'what should be done' beyond individual pronouncements will always involve active collaboration and engagement with others, and will be easier or more difficult depending on the degree to which that collaboration and engagement is already in place (Hutchings, 1999b; 2000b).

Given that Hegelian feminist ethics cannot rely on the authority of a single, rationally grounded voice to validate moral and political judgement and prescription, there is clearly potential common ground between Hegelian and deliberative approaches to citizenship. Both deliberative and Hegelian arguments stress the importance of intersubjectivity as the basis for moral and political claims. There are, however, significant differences between what is meant by intersubjectivity in the case of deliberative democrats such as Benhabib and what it means for Hegelian feminism. In Benhabib's case, intersubjective recognition ultimately relies on a shared capacity to reason and a shared interest in emancipation between different citizens, which operates as a regulative ideal for democratic deliberation (Hutchings, 1997; 1999b). Hegelian feminists see intersubjectivity in terms of a complex of partial identities, which are not united by any commonality transcending that which is already implicit within ethical life. For Hegelian feminists there is no 'generalized other' to provide a basis for mutual recognition across the actual messiness and power differentials between citizens. This implies the claim that the rationalism of the Habermasian model of deliberation depoliticizes the actuality of political engagement even within liberal democratic states. Hegelian feminists are less optimistic about the capacity of argument to resolve differences than Habermasian feminists. The task for Hegelian feminists is not to define the appropriate procedure for decision-making, but to understand the conditions of possibility for economic, social and political change and to identify appropriate strategies accordingly. The conclusions which follow from such work become staked as claims within discussions between feminists as to what should be done and may be identified as authoritative or as coercive, depending

on the degree to which their grounds are shared or shareable by other feminists. There is no guarantee of rightness or of agreement separable from the shifting ground of political actualities.

How would a Hegelian feminist ethics respond to the debate over identity? There are two things which I argue would be part of a Hegelian response to arguments surrounding identity politics within feminism. First, as with rationalist, critical and postmodernist feminists, Hegelian feminists deny that women share an identity in any essential or fixed sense, and would deny that any other group shares this kind of identity. This makes Hegelian feminism sympathetic to black, third-world and postmodernist feminisms which argue for the plurality of women's identities and the consequent plurality of their political goals and needs (Mohanty, Russo and Torres, 1991). Second, however, this sympathy is counteracted by an equally Hegelian emphasis on the importance of norms, structures and institutions (objective spirit) in the formation of subjective spirit. To the extent that there are commonalities in the position of women, then possibilities of connection and of collective self-identification emerge. Hegelianism is distinguished by its rejection of the notion of radical alterity when understood as an absolute difference in principle between different subject positions. This means that it must reject feminisms which rely on notions of fixed, absolute incommensurabilities between different women or between women and men. This does not mean that there is not radical difference in the world across time and place (within and between cultures), but difference is no more essential in principle than sameness. Once more there is nothing to tie Hegelianism down a priori either to the assertion of identity or non-identity; these are the possibilities ingrained in the actualities of ethical life. It might well be as politically foolish for feminism to abandon the notion of women as an identity-group as to assume that it must necessarily exist. Once again, the Hegelian feminist must begin not with a priori assumptions, but with the phenomenological task of understanding where the links and the faultlines may be between different groups of women, their identity and interests.

Conclusion

The above account of how Hegelian feminism might respond to established arguments within feminist political theory emphasizes the lack of a specific, settled prescriptive content of a Hegelian political philosophy. For many feminist readers this raises the same alarm bells

as were raised in relation to Urban Walker's phenomenological ethical turn discussed in the previous chapter. If there is no clear prescription, then where is the point of engaging in political philosophy at all, particularly if the philosopher in question is interested in criticizing and improving the contemporary world (something which is pretty much true by definition for feminist philosophers)? To respond to this by reasserting some definitive ground or goal for Hegelian feminist politics would be to undermine the fundamental Hegelian claim that being and truth are inseparable and self-changing. These two claims taken together necessarily imply that any individual's judgement is dependent and partial both within and across time. This does not mean that prescription is not possible, but it does preclude prescription which could be known to be right a priori and forever. Feminism is the offspring of the recognition of spirit as self-determination, which Hegel identified as one-sidedly grasped in Kant's philosophy and the revolutionary terror. There is no authoritative answer to the question of the substantive political implications of the recognition of spirit as self-determination, but there are certain answers which feminist Hegelians claim are unsustainable in theory and practice. The one substantive claim to which feminist Hegelians must be committed is that feminist political thought should avoid the temptation of transcendence, and be honest about the this-worldly conditions of possibility of the intelligibility and likely effects of its claims.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this book I made the claim that Hegel's thought has something to contribute to philosophical arguments within feminism over sexual difference, epistemology, moral and political theory. This is something already well recognized in certain forms of feminist thinking, and the Hegelian feminism which I am advocating has many features which overlap with the trajectories of feminist philosophy that I have identified under the labels: critical; sexual difference; and postmodernist. One way of clarifying the nature of a Hegelian feminism is to look in turn at how it overlaps with and how it is distinguished from alternative feminist approaches. In doing this, it becomes clear that the ways in which the different feminisms share ground with Hegelianism differ in potentially complementary respects. On the basis of this, I will go on to highlight the key ontological, epistemological and normative insights of Hegelian feminist philosophy and the kind of philosophical work which follows from them.¹

Critical feminism is at its most Hegelian in its conception of human action and reflection as always mediated through social and material relations, its consequent rejection of the notion of 'innocent' access to knowledge of the world aside from one's position within it, and its conception of immanent critique (see chapter 1). All of these features are derived directly from Marx's appropriation of Hegelian thought in his early work. Critical feminism departs from Hegel, however, in so far as it takes a normative turn, often following Habermas, and extrapolates a necessary direction to history inherent within a trans-historical standpoint for judgement. In following this path, critical feminism reinvents a dualism which Hegel was seeking to overcome in his critique of Kant. Critical feminism of the kinds offered by

Benhabib, Mills and Porter (in common with the left-Hegelian, including the Frankfurt School, tradition in general) oscillates somewhat uneasily between a fully Hegelian and a quasi-Kantian position when it comes to the meaning of critique (Hutchings, 1996). Critical feminism wrestles with two temptations in relation to accounts of judgement: first, the temptation to invoke universal, rationally accessible moral principles to underpin critique of women's oppression; second, the temptation to translate a feminist standpoint into 'the' feminist standpoint. In the former case, critical feminism becomes difficult to distinguish from rationalist approaches and universalizes the meanings of freedom and emancipation for both men and women. In the latter case, critical feminism risks falling back into familiar traps of homogenizing women's experience and interests. When either of these tendencies predominate, then the philosopher is, contrary to a Hegelian position, tempted to ground their discourse in something over and above the complexity of their own identity and non-identity with spirit, and therefore to presume the authority of that discourse in advance of its recognition by others.

Sexual difference feminism is, as has already been noted, a broad category. I have used it to refer to feminist arguments which attach a primary importance to sexual difference in accounts of individual subjectivity and judgement, but not to accounts which treat sex as a given, biological category. Sexual difference feminists, I would argue, share ground with Hegelian feminism precisely in their emphasis on the ontological significance of sexual difference and the materiality of its perpetuation, whether through entrenched linguistic, psychic, economic, social, legal or political structures. Clearly, however, sexual difference feminists read different implications into the structures which they expose and analyse. For some, these structures are envisaged as monolithic and immutable, for others they are understood in more fluid and mutable ways. The former vision, which is characteristic of cruder forms of radical feminist thinking, is anti-Hegelian in its fixing of certain ontological and normative dualities. Thinkers such as Irigaray, however, are far more subtle in their analysis. Irigaray comes closest to Hegelianism in the ways in which she traces the faultlines within the patriarchal symbolic order, by demonstrating how its conditions of possibility come back to haunt it in the 'eternal irony' of the feminine. This immanent critique, however, is something which Irigaray suggests that feminists must move beyond, because it remains trapped within the terms of the patriarchal symbolic order rather than offering a radical alternative. This notion of radical alterity is alien to Hegelianism: for a Hegelian feminist, there is no

route to a feminist ethics and politics outside of the relative identities within the multiple structures (subjective and objective) of contemporary ethical life in which all men and women are caught. In this sense, MacKinnon, although her analysis of sexual difference is much less subtle than Irigaray's, is ultimately more Hegelian in her prescription of a feminist ethics and politics, which uses the master's tools to dismantle the master's house.

Postmodernist feminism may take the form of a discursive pluralism, as in Hekman's epistemological perspective discussed under that label in chapter 1. Thinkers such as Butler and Diprose represent a rather different feminist postmodernist route, one which is deeply engaged in the question of how sexual difference, among other differences, is produced, and what its ethical (moral and political) implications might be. The former type of postmodernist thinking shares little with a Hegelian feminism in terms of its philosophical assumptions since it embraces a generalized discursive constructionism, is uninterested in material structures and relations, and adopts an easy relativism and pluralism of action and judgement. In contrast, the work of Butler and Diprose presents strongly, although not wholly, Hegelian features. In Butler's case, her Hegelianism is most evident in her refusal to distinguish between sex and gender and in the immanence of her notion of critique. The rejection of the sex/gender distinction follows the Hegelian and left-Hegelian tradition in affirming the identity and non-identity of natural and social, organic and spiritual being. In addition, Butler's critique of Irigaray as reinventing binary oppositions in her invocation of radical alterity is an argument strongly reminiscent of Hegel. Nevertheless, Butler's celebration of the disruption of the normative order, in her discussion of Antigone's 'contaminated' voice, suggests the possibility of critique which is not immanent. In this sense, as I argue in my discussion of Butler in chapter 4, a residual notion of externality or radical alterity does continue to be invoked in Butler's ideal of the performance which disrupts the norm or enacts the impossible. Diprose, as we have seen, makes direct use of Hegel's account of the emergence of self-conscious being in her own account of embodied subjectivity, which again relies on rejecting a clear distinction between natural or organic and social or spiritual being, and on emphasizing the centrality of habituation. Diprose does not follow Butler, however, in completely rejecting the idea of an 'outside'. The concepts of particularity and of freedom gesture in Diprose's account to the possibilities of non-heteronomous action and decision, something which is unthinkable from a Hegelian point of view.

The key features of a Hegelian feminist philosophy emerge clearly from the above account. In terms of ontology, a Hegelian feminism rejects radical distinctions between natural and social being and takes sexual difference seriously. It does not, however, treat sexual difference as either ontologically uniform or as unchanging. As an aspect of spirit, sexual difference is an aspect of self-changing being, and the ontology of sexual difference must therefore be sensitive to both place and time. Whether a particular feminist thinker is self-conscious about it or not, their account of sexual difference will in any case be unintelligible except in relation to their place and time. This latter point brings us to the characteristics of Hegelian epistemology, which is premised on the relative identity of meaning with being. On this account, following Kant, knowledge is always a matter of self-understanding. This is not because the knower creates the truth, but because the question of truth is inseparable from the question of the being of the knower. The partiality of any knowledge claim is guaranteed by the relative identity (the identity and non-identity) not simply of knower and truth, but of knower, the object of knowledge and the 'observing consciousness' from whom the knower claims, but may well not receive, recognition.

Hegelian moral and political philosophy is the most disturbing element of a Hegelian feminism from the point of view of other feminist philosophies. Many feminists of a critical, sexual difference or postmodernist type would accept something like the ontological and epistemological assumptions outlined above, but would have a problem with Hegel's denial of both a transcendental moral imperative (the possibility of autonomy) and radical alterity. These two possibilities constitute common ways of grounding feminist critique and prescriptions for change. If neither option is available to feminism then the worry is that feminist thought becomes merely the reflection and reinforcement of the status quo. Ultimately, however, the claim of Hegelian feminism would be that progress cannot be guaranteed, and to the extent it is made possible it is only on the basis of an authority generated through concrete intersubjective engagement, not through the access of the philosopher to a ground of judgement which is somehow outside or beyond that engagement.

There is a different concern which some sexual difference and postmodernist feminists share regarding Hegel's denial of radical alterity. It is argued, as Irigaray and Diprose both argue, that to block radical alterity is to presume or inaugurate an economy of equivalence for all human individuals, in other words, to reduce distinct and different specificity to sameness. It is certainly the case that

a Hegelian feminism is premised on ideas of actual and potential connection and commonality. It is not, however, premised on an assumption of some common substantive identity for all human beings. The question for feminist philosophers is whether the notion of simultaneous identity and non-identity permits the perception and comprehension of difference between the sexes, and between different women and different men. Following Hegel's argument about the failure of attempts to avoid the way of despair by inventing a new and separate path, I would argue that relying on a notion of radical alterity actually closes off the possibility either of recognizing difference or of identifying the conditions of possibility for such recognition. Radical otherness can only operate like a Kantian ideal of reason, an abstract moral imperative towards which feminists may gesture in response to the patriarchal order. In contrast to this, a Hegelian feminism is concerned with a this-worldly, imperfect engagement with others, which may or may not be possible in any given instance, but which should certainly not be ruled out in advance.

The assumptions of Hegelian philosophy rule out other possible philosophical assumptions to do with the nature of being, truth and the good. Nevertheless, the agenda of such a feminist philosophy is in a substantive sense a very open one. Questions about the meaning and validity of substantive claims concerning sexual difference and its implications for science or for politics are not resolved in advance; prescriptive questions about appropriate ways to address women's oppression are also not resolved *a priori*. Above all else, Hegelian feminism is a phenomenological project, which emphasizes the importance of comprehension as the key task of philosophy, as opposed to judgement. Moreover this is a project which is inherently intersubjective, both in process and outcome. No philosopher exists as a monadic intelligence; whether acknowledged or not our work as philosophers is always also the work of others. In addition, insight into the world is premised on sharing the world; it depends on recognition. If there is no recognition then there is no meaning, although that is not to say that there may not be meaning in another time and place. The Hegelian feminist begins her analysis from her own self-understanding; the acknowledgment of this is the acknowledgment of the necessary partiality of all claims to knowledge and truth. This entails a certain modesty in the status accorded to one's claims and a certain realism in the normative and prescriptive judgements one seeks to put forward and defend. In this sense, as well as being phenomenological, Hegelian feminist philosophy is fundamentally pragmatic and political.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 A very useful collection of previously published essays which gives an overview of the range of feminist philosophical engagement with Hegel is provided by Mills (1996b); see also *Owl of Minerva*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1992: 41–69; Sandford and Stone (1999). In the argument that follows, the significance of a reading of Hegel in the work of feminist philosophers such as Beauvoir (1997; 1953), Irigaray (1985) and Butler (1990; 1993; 2000) is highlighted (see chapters 3 and 4). In seeking to bring out the positive significance of Hegel for feminist theory I am following in the footsteps of Brod (1988); Ring (1991); Ravven (1996); Gauthier (1997; 1999). Other feminist engagements with Hegel that are explored are: Benhabib (1996a); Mills (1996a); Porter (1991); Diprose (1994).
- 2 By 'left-Hegelian', I refer to the interpretive tradition inaugurated by Marx and the young Hegelians and carried forward in first-generation Frankfurt School critical theory in the twentieth century. The most significant particular influence on my interpretation is Rose's reading of Hegel in *Hegel Contra Sociology* (1981) and *The Broken Middle* (1992). It should be noted that this interpretation differs in important respects from that characteristic of Habermasian critical theorists and feminists, such as Benhabib (Benhabib 1996a), who remain closer to Marx in wanting to separate the 'rational kernel' from the 'metaphysical shell' of Hegel's thought. My own reading, following Rose, is a more holistic one and stresses the importance of the relations between Hegel's earlier and later work and between different aspects of his thought. See chapter 2 for an outline of my interpretation of Hegel's work.
- 3 Benhabib demonstrates that Hegel's own time and place provided examples of women's lives very different from the hearth and home picture that Hegel presents as exemplary. In her article 'On Hegel, Women and Irony'

she refers to the life of Caroline Schlegel to make the point that at the time he wrote Hegel's work had conservative implications in important respects with regard to women's rights to live their lives freely (Benhabib, 1996a). See chapters 2 and 4–6 for further discussion of Hegel's explicit attitudes towards women in his philosophical work.

Chapter 1 Feminist Philosophy and the Way of Despair

- 1 The terms 'sex' and 'gender' have been the focus of intense debate within feminist philosophy. Traditionally, 'sex' has been taken to mean biological sexual characteristics and 'gender' to refer to socially and discursively constructed 'femininity'. It will become apparent that one of the key claims of the Hegelian feminism I am advocating is that there is no clear distinction between nature and culture ('spirit' in Hegelian terms) and that the meaning of neither nature nor culture is fixed. Throughout this book, therefore, I use the terms sex and gender either interchangeably or together in order to indicate both their fluidity and mutual inextricability.
- 2 Important contributions to this genealogical investigation into the philosophical tradition include: Okin, 1979; Elshtain, 1981; Lloyd, 1984; Nye, 1988; Pateman, 1988; Shanley and Pateman, 1991.
- 3 Benhabib's argument is in some ways similar to Skinner's approach, according to which the meaning of a text in the history of political thought cannot be fully understood without a sense of what the text would have meant to a contemporary author and audience (Tully, 1988).
- 4 In this particular essay Benhabib makes this argument in relation to Hegel. She argues that Hegel does not maintain his own insights into the constructed nature of sexual difference, but lapses into an essentialized view of women's nature and role which undermines the proclaimed universalism of his argument (Benhabib, 1996a: 34). Benhabib's theoretical position exemplifies the 'critical' feminist approach discussed in chapter 1 and in relation to the reading of Hegel in chapter 2.3.
- 5 Classifications are always inadequate, misleading and potentially offensive to the thinkers being categorized. They are inadequate because they don't do justice to the range of work available. In the case of my schema it could be argued that there ought to be a separate category of psychoanalytic feminisms, such as Irigaray's which I include under 'sexual difference'. Similarly, perhaps there should be an 'existentialist' category for Beauvoir's work, which I subsume under 'critical feminism'. Classifications are misleading because in practice philosophical work rarely fits neatly into one category. In particular, there is a slipperiness in the 'sexual difference' and 'postmodernist' labels which I am using, in each case, to cover a wide range of thinkers. For instance, I categorize Diprose under 'postmodernist', but she could also be argued to belong

to the 'sexual difference' category and so on. Finally, classifications are potentially offensive, because they invariably carry connotations to which thinkers so classified object. The obvious example of this in my case is Butler (see n. 9 below). Having said all this, however, classification is also necessary to any conceptual work and I believe that the trajectories of feminist thought identified above are recognizable and offer a defensible account of the breadth of contemporary feminist philosophy in the Western tradition.

- 6 The broad category of work to which I am referring here would include much of the work in the recent *Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy* (Fricker and Hornsby, 2000), see also: Antony and Witt, 1993; Green, 1995. In feminist epistemology, this category would include those whom Harding labels as feminist empiricists (Harding, 1991; Tanesini, 1999). Within feminist ethics, this category would refer to those feminist philosophers criticizing the ethic of care from the perspective of justice (Scaltsas, 1992). In feminist political philosophy, this category would include the classic liberal feminism of Wollstonecraft and Mill and thinkers such as Okin (1989).
- 7 This broad category of work includes feminists such as Fraser (1989; 1997); Benhabib (1992); Mills (1987); Hartsock (1987); Ring (1991). In feminist epistemology this category is associated with the idea of a feminist standpoint as articulated by Hartsock (1987). In feminist ethics this category would include critics of the care/justice debate who want to synthesize elements of both, such as Benhabib (1992) and Porter (1991). In feminist political philosophy it includes feminists who draw on Marxist and Frankfurt School ideas to argue for a broadly socialist agenda (Fraser, 1997) and feminists who argue with Habermas for a more deliberative liberal democratic state (Benhabib, 1992; 1996b). Although her work is distinctive in its reliance on existentialist thought, I would argue that Beauvoir's work comes closest to the 'critical' feminist philosophy category (see discussions in chapters 3 and 4).
- 8 I associate the more moderate sexual difference approach with claims made for values and virtues embedded in the social practices of femininity; here I would include theories such as the ethic of care and maternal thinking (Noddings, 1984; Ruddick, 1990). In political philosophy, I would include Pateman (1988). Psychoanalytic feminisms which take sexual difference as having structural primacy in the psychic and linguistic order tend to be more radical in their implications (Gatens, 1991: 100–21). The latter sub-category is characteristic of a highly influential tradition of French feminism; within this book its most important exponent is Irigaray (1985).
- 9 I am using the term 'postmodernism' to cover a broad range of work which espouses ideas drawn from a variety of sources including Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard and Deleuze. Very often such work shares influences with both critical and psychoanalytic feminist philosophy, so that it is difficult to sustain a clear-cut distinction between the categories. However,

I would argue that what marks the work I am labelling as postmodernist is the shift away from any stable ground of meaning and any unified conception of either sex or gender. Examples of this kind of work would include Hekman (1990; 1995); Flax (1990); Spelman (1988); Diprose (1994); Butler and Scott (1992) and Butler (1990; 1993; 2000). Butler objects to the label 'postmodernist' and its link to a Lyotardian philosophical position; however, I would argue that in terms of her own suggested definition below, it is reasonable to categorize her work in this way. 'If postmodernism as a term has some force or meaning within social theory, or feminist social theory in particular, perhaps it can be found in the critical exercise that seeks to show how theory, how philosophy, is always implicated in power, and perhaps that is precisely what is symptomatically at work in the effort to domesticate and refuse a set of powerful criticisms under the rubric of postmodernism. That the philosophical apparatus in its various conceptual refinements is always engaged in exercising power is not a new insight, but then again the postmodern ought not to be confused with the new; after all, the pursuit of the "new" is the preoccupation of high modernism; if anything, the postmodern casts doubt upon the possibility of a "new" that is not already implicated in the "old"' (Butler, 1995: 38–9).

- 10 In the 1990s the debate between critical and postmodernist feminisms became particularly important (see Nicholson, 1990; Benhabib et al., 1995).
- 11 It is important to note that many of the developments in mainstream post-positivist philosophical epistemology echo the concerns of feminist thinking – according to Tanesini, contemporary mainstream epistemology cannot be held to be equivalent to the kind of 'first philosophy' and foundationalism, with its assumptions about neutral epistemic authority and objectivity, of which feminist epistemologists are critical (Tanesini, 1999: 3–65). For the purposes of my argument, the accuracy of feminist critical characterizations of mainstream epistemology is not my primary concern.
- 12 Roughly speaking, feminist empiricism is an example of the rationalist approach within feminist philosophy; feminist standpoint theory is associated with both critical and sexual difference feminisms, though particularly with the former in the context of epistemology (there are parallels with the way the ethic of care is invoked as a standpoint for judgement, see chapter 1.3); and feminist postmodernism is an example of the broad postmodernist approach. For an overview of the different approaches, see Tanesini (1999); Alcoff and Potter (1993); Antony and Witt (1993). See also Hutchings (1999a).
- 13 Feminist ethics has been one of the most important areas of philosophical work within feminist philosophy. A sense of the scope of feminist ethics can be gained from Cole and Coultrap-McQuin (1992); Frazer, Hornsby and Lovibond (1992); Shogan (1993); DesAutels and Waugh (2001). See also Held (1993); Friedman (2000); Jaggar (2000).

Chapter 2 Philosophy as the Task of Comprehension

- 1 Hegel scholarship in the anglophone world has grown exponentially over the last forty years. One of the results of this has been greatly heightened sensitivity to problems of translation in Hegel and the production of revised translations of many of Hegel's works; see Translator's preface (Nisbet) to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, 1991) and Petry's translation of *Philosophy of Nature* (Hegel, 1970b). Within this book I refer to translations only, although I will occasionally draw attention to Hegel's terminology in German. I rely on Miller's translations of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Science of Logic* and *Philosophy of Nature*, and on Nisbet's of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Inwood's *A Hegel Dictionary* provides an extremely useful exposition of Hegel's philosophical terminology (Inwood, 1992).
- 2 In the history of readings of Hegel, neither 'closed' nor 'open' versions of Hegel are necessarily linked to any particular philosophical perspective or ideological agenda on the part of the commentator. An influential closed reading of Hegel is that of Popper, who interprets Hegel's philosophy from a liberal perspective in idealist and anti-liberal terms (Popper, 1945). Hegel's work figures rather similarly as a closed and absolutist project in some postmodernist thought, though it is criticized for different reasons (Foucault, 1974: 328–35; Lyotard, 1984: 81–2). There are also contemporary closed accounts of Hegel which read him as a realist and liberal as opposed to idealist and authoritarian (Winfield, 1988; 1989; Maker, 1994). The open type of reading, exemplified most famously by Marx and by the socialist tradition of critical theory, is also shared by contemporary liberal and communitarian interpretations which detach and endorse certain aspects of Hegel's arguments and reject or ignore the rest (Smith, 1989; Wood, 1990; Patten, 1999). In addition, certain deconstructionist readings are of an open kind (Derrida, 1987; Barnett, 1998; Hamacher, 1998; Malabou, 2000).
- 3 Compare Pippin (1989) with Maker (1994); see Stewart (1996, Part 2); Westphal and H. S. Harris (in Browning, 1997).
- 4 Hegel only ever published two books as such, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic*. The rest of his published work consists in early writings, many of which are fragmentary and were not published in his lifetime, and published versions of his lectures, including those on the philosophies of nature and right.
- 5 Hegel responds to a very wide range of different philosophers and historical events in his work. In suggesting that it is Kant's philosophy which is of central importance to his project I am following interpreters such as Rose (1981) and Pippin (1989). The Kantian texts with which Hegel was engaging include the *Critique of Pure Reason* (first published 1781/1787; Kant, 1983), *Critique of Practical Reason* (first published 1788; Kant, 1956), *Grounding For the Metaphysics of Morals* (first published

- 1785; Kant, 1981) and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (first published 1797; Kant, 1991).
- 6 Hegel discussed both Kant's philosophy and the French Revolution at various points in his work; for examples of the kinds of argument I am sketching here, see *Phenomenology* (Hegel, 1977: 139–45; 252–62; 355–63) and *Logic* (Hegel, 1969: 577–95). My interpretation of Kant owes a great deal to Hegel's critique of Kant's work (see Hutchings, 1996).
 - 7 Hegel uses a variety of terms, but invariably philosophical comprehension is signified by words which literally imply holding together, most notably *begreifen* which means to grip hold of as well as to conceptualize. Judgement, on the other hand, is *urteilen*, which Hegel claimed was derived from *teilen*, to divide (see Inwood, 1992: 58–61; 151–3).
 - 8 There is a massive scholarly literature on the *Phenomenology*. An excellent introductory account which also includes a guide to further reading is Robert Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (2002). A classic and influential commentary is provided by Hyppolite (1974); more recent commentaries include Pinkard (1994); Forster (1998) and H. S. Harris's magisterial two-volume account (1997a and 1997b). See also M. Westphal (1990); J. Stewart (1998); M. N. Stewart (1998); and Browning (1997).
 - 9 The two sections of the *Phenomenology* which have been of particular significance to feminist readers are discussed briefly in chapter 2.2 and in much more detail in chapters 3 and 4. These are Hegel's so-called 'master/slave dialectic' and his discussion of Sophocles' play *Antigone* (Hegel, 1977: 111–19; 267–89).
 - 10 There is no space within the context of this book to discuss the range of Hegel's analysis in the 'Reason' chapter. It includes critical accounts of Kant's epistemology and moral thought, and a broad range of empiricist and idealist accounts of natural scientific knowledge and morality. See Stern, 2002: 97–133; Pinkard, 1994: 79–134; H. S. Harris 1997a: 447–615; 1997b: 6–146.
 - 11 The question of the relation between the *Phenomenology* and *Logic* continues to be a key focus of debate within Hegel scholarship (see Houlgate, 1991; Pinkard, 1988, 1994; Winfield, 1989; Pippin, 1989; K. Westphal, 1989; Forster, 1998). Two useful commentaries on the *Logic* are Burbidge (1981) and E. Harris (1983); see also 'Hegel's Logic and Metaphysics' (1999).
 - 12 '[T]he proposition in the *form of a judgement* is not suited to express speculative truths; a familiarity with this fact is likely to remove many misunderstandings of speculative truths. Judgement is an *identical* relation between subject and predicate; in it we abstract from the fact that the subject has a number of determinatenesses other than that of the predicate, and also that the predicate is more extensive than the subject. Now if the content is speculative, the *non-identical* aspect of subject and predicate is also an essential moment, but in the judgement this is not expressed' (Hegel, 1969: 90–1).

- 13 There will be a further discussion of Hegel's epistemology in chapter 4.3. Commentators differ about whether Hegel's account of the conditions of absolute knowledge in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is to be understood in realist (K. Westphal, 1989) or idealist (Pippin, 1989) terms; and over the meaning of truth for Hegel, whether Hegel thinks of truth in terms of correspondence – and if so between what – (Harris, 1997c; K. Westphal, 1997) or consensus (Forster, 1998). The interpretation suggested here implies that Hegel is combining what are normally seen as mutually incompatible positions.
- 14 See Houlgate (1998) and *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* (No. 26, 1992) for examples of contemporary discussion of Hegel's philosophy of nature. The extent to which Hegel was engaging with the science of his time has become much more fully acknowledged in recent scholarship (see Petry's translation of the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel, 1970b).
- 15 One notorious example of this is Hegel's embracing of Goethe's theory of colour as 'adequate to the notion' (Hegel, 1970a: 206).
- 16 *Antigone* recounts the final episode in Sophocles' Oedipus trilogy. In the play Oedipus's twin sons have slain each other when one (Polyneices) illegitimately tried to usurp the other's (Eteocles) throne. The play deals with the tragic conflict between Antigone (Oedipus' daughter) and her uncle the king (Creon). Antigone fights for the right to bury her disgraced brother on grounds of the sacred obligations of kinship. Creon rejects her right on grounds of the equally sacred obligations of political life, which Polyneices has betrayed. Although her sister (Ismene) attempts to dissuade her, Antigone defies her uncle and breaks the law. She is punished by being buried alive and commits suicide. Creon's son (Haemon) was betrothed to Antigone and also commits suicide, as does his mother, Creon's wife (Eurydice). Creon is therefore left bereaved and hopeless (Sophocles, 1982; Steiner, 1984).
- 17 For examples of rationalist readings of Hegel, see Elshtain (1981: 170–83); Landes (1982: 125–44); Lloyd (1984: 74–85); Coole (1993: 139–44); Stone (1999); Brake (1999).
- 18 In the two following chapters, this critical approach to Hegel will be exemplified in the work of Beauvoir (1953) and Mills (1996a); other examples discussed in the book include Benhabib (1996a; 1996b, see chapter 1) and Porter (1991, discussed in chapter 4). See also Rose (1981; 1992); Arthur (1990); Brod (1992: 174–9); Gauthier (1997; 1999). My interpretation of Hegel is also an example of the critical, left-Hegelian tradition.
- 19 Lonzi's 'Let's Spit on Hegel' is probably the best-known example of a radical sexual difference feminist response to Hegel (Lonzi, 1996). More nuanced responses which rely on notions of sexual difference can be found in Pateman, discussed in chapter 6 (1988; 1996) and in arguments which draw on object relations theory (see chapter 5).
- 20 Lacan is also an important reference point for feminist philosophers I am classifying under the 'postmodernist' category, most notably Butler.

- 21 The most important and influential example of this kind of reading is that of Irigaray, which is discussed in chapter 3 (Irigaray, 1985).
- 22 The exemplar of postmodernist feminist encounters with Hegel in this book is Butler, whose work is discussed in chapter 4 (Butler, 1990; 1993; 2000); see also Diprose (1994) and Krell (1996).

Chapter 3 Thinking the Second Sex

- 1 There is a considerable feminist secondary literature on Beauvoir's work, although much of it is concerned with her literary rather than her philosophical writings. A useful recent collection of feminist responses to Beauvoir is Simons (1995). For accounts of Beauvoir's thought in relation to both mainstream and feminist philosophical approaches see also: Simons (1999); Murphy (1999); Lundgren-Gothlin (1996); Moi (1990; 1994; 1999); Green (1995: 130–48); Chanter (1995: 47–79); Le Doeuff (1991); Nye (1988: 73–114); Butler (1989).
- 2 See Hutchings (2001) for an earlier published version of this chapter.
- 3 Thus, although Beauvoir is taking an explicitly anti-Hegelian line throughout the text, she is also relying on Hegel as a resource for making her argument. In later life she commented on the peculiarity of the quasi-Hegelianism of this text and the lack of fit between this and the strongly existentialist premises of her argument: see quotation from *Force of Circumstance* quoted by Green in Murphy (ed.) (1999: 180). Several feminist commentators on Beauvoir have noted the tension between the Hegelian and Sartrean elements in both *Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex* (see: Lundgren-Gothlin, 1996; Chanter, 1995; Sutton-Morris, 1999; Green, 1999; Le Doeuff, 1995). This tension is central to the argument of this chapter, although I wish to stress that its presence is owed to the fact that Beauvoir's Hegel is read through Sartre and Kojève; she is replaying a tension within existentialist readings of Hegel rather than setting Hegel against existentialism – especially within *Ethics of Ambiguity*.
- 4 Beauvoir's equation of existence with destruction and consumption is taken from Bataille (Beauvoir, 1997: 126).
- 5 For Sartre, the notion of mutual recognition sums up the false epistemological and ontological optimism implicit in the idea of absolute knowledge. Sartre's rejection of this idea is central to his own philosophical position in *Being and Nothingness*, which is premised on the radical impossibility of experiencing oneself or another as simultaneously subject and object (Sartre, 1958: 241).
- 6 It has been suggested by Spivak (1992) that, read against the grain, Beauvoir's account of women's biology, specifically in relation to reproduction, is in fact more affirmative of the ontological and ethical significance of the figure of the Mother than it is normally taken to be (1992: 60–3). A different point is made by Battersby (1998: 35–7), who argues

for a reconceptualization of bodily materiality in terms other than those provided by Beauvoir, while nevertheless arguing for the centrality of embodiment to subject position.

- 7 Beauvoir's account of the history of human civilization is thoroughly modernist. It is premised on the idea that there is a development from simplicity to complexity in human society, and owes a great deal to Marxist arguments as to the material driving forces of historical change. Critics of *The Second Sex* have argued that its argument relies on highly questionable and outdated anthropological material, which is used to underpin false contrasts between 'primitive' and 'developed' cultures.
- 8 It is worth noting that Beauvoir is ambiguous in her references to the barrier to women's development as existents posed by their lack of participation in 'life-risking' practices. As Chanter has pointed out, within the discussion of historical development in *The Second Sex*, it is not women's lack of participation in fighting but in hunting which is referred to as disadvantaging them (Chanter, 1995: 61). In the quotation cited above, it is women's lack of opportunity to fight men within a struggle for recognition which is seen as the problem, a reference which leads Lundgren-Gothlin to argue that Beauvoir sees women as unable to participate in the struggle for recognition at all and therefore necessarily confined to the position of absolute other (Lundgren-Gothlin, 1996: 72). It seems clear in any case that there is something peculiar about the position of women, which is not the same as – though it shares characteristics with – the position either of slaves or those defined as racially inferior, since neither of the latter are in principle excluded from the possibility of violent, life-risking action (for parallels with racial oppression, see Beauvoir, 1953: 266).
- 9 It is clear from Beauvoir's autobiographical writing, as well as from *The Second Sex*, that she put enormous value on independent, non-domestic work as a manifestation of free existence. She habitually distinguished herself from the standard positioning of 'woman' because of her lack of domestic responsibilities and her work as a writer.
- 10 In her insistence on the sphere of reproduction as one of immanence, Beauvoir echoes her contemporary Arendt, who is equally insistent on the essentially animal nature of 'labour' – the efforts needed to sustain and reproduce the human species (Arendt, 1958).
- 11 Most analyses of the opening paragraphs of the section on self-consciousness tend to read the account of the dependence of self-consciousness on both organic nature and other self-consciousnesses in terms of two distinct lessons. The first lesson concerns the inability of self-consciousness to find confirmation of itself through relation to external objects of desire. The second lesson concerns the need for self-consciousness to gain self-certainty through recognition by another self-consciousness (Pinkard, 1994: 46–53). My suggestion here is that these lessons are more closely intertwined than is often acknowledged, and

that this can be seen in the parallels between the passages in the *Phenomenology* and Hegel's account of the relation between nature and spirit in his *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind* (Hegel, 1970a; 1971). See also H. S. Harris, 1997a: 324–36.

- 12 The work of Mills, Irigaray and Butler, discussed in chapter 4, exemplify the critical, sexual difference and postmodernist directions in which post-Beauvoirian feminist philosophy develops.

Chapter 4 Re-thinking the Second Sex

- 1 See Hutchings (2000a) for an earlier published version of this chapter.
- 2 My reading of all of these texts is informed by my broader knowledge of the theoretical positions of each thinker. However, I have focused my attention mainly on these particular arguments and therefore do not do anything like full justice either to the overall philosophical position of each theorist or the other points in their work where they engage with Hegel's work (for instance in Irigaray's *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 1993). An exception to this is my drawing on Mills's original articulation of her argument *contra* Hegel in the book *Woman, Nature and Psyche* (1987).
- 3 See n. 16, chapter 2 for a brief synopsis of the plot in *Antigone*.
- 4 As will become clear, the special obligations of sisters are highlighted in Hegel's account but, as many commentators have noticed, there is also a tendency in Hegel's treatment of the philosophical implications of *Antigone* in both the *Phenomenology* and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* to shift apparently seamlessly between women as wives and mothers and women as sisters.
- 5 The insistence on the fact of both Antigone's and Creon's guilt is one of the most hotly disputed aspects of Hegel's reading, in particular because of the way he supports it through the use of a misquotation (see Mills et al.). However, he is not alone in this reading (Nussbaum, 1986).
- 6 See Nussbaum (1986) for an alternative reading as well as those given below. The play itself has inspired an enormous range of responses and possible readings (both in Hegel's time and beyond), which are explored in detail by Steiner (1984).
- 7 Mills is critical of Beauvoir for suggesting that women's position can be understood via the master/slave dialectic. Along with other commentators on Beauvoir she underlines the point that women never even get as far as being slaves in Hegel's story (Mills, 1987: 11; Mills, 1996a: 87).
- 8 Lacan's work is crucially important to both Irigaray and Butler. A useful account of Lacan's theory and its significance for feminists can be found in Grosz (1990); see also Gatens (1991: 100–21).
- 9 Schor, in a useful exposition of the contrast between Beauvoir and Irigaray, points out that whereas Beauvoir's subject is the heroic,

existentialist subject (*homo faber*), Irigaray's subject is the grammatical bearer of a subject position in language (*homo parlans*) (Schor, 1994: 63–4).

- 10 This contrast is drawn particularly clearly in Irigaray's discussion of the *Antigone* story in *Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Irigaray, 1993: 127).
- 11 In a prescient discussion, prior to Butler's explicit treatment of *Antigone* in *Antigone's Claim*, Battersby draws a contrast between Butler and Irigaray on the figure of Antigone. Battersby suggests that Irigaray's Antigone remains closer to Hegel's reading than to Lacan's, whereas Butler's work should be understood as a radicalization of Lacan's. 'In effect, Butler exhorts all women, blacks, gays and lesbians (of whatever sex) to become "Antigones", living in a state of eternal irony – subverting the symbolic from the borders within' (Battersby, 1998: 121).
- 12 My reading is indebted to Harris's interpretation of Hegel's account of Greek ethical life in the *Phenomenology* (H. S. Harris, 1997b: 125–98).
- 13 It's important to remember that Hegel is using *Antigone* as the ultimate example of Greek tragedy and the way it represents the internal tensions within Greek ethical life. In the discussion in the *Phenomenology*, he refers to other tragedies, particularly the other two within Sophocles' Oedipus cycle (Hegel, 1977: 279–87; Harris, 1997b: 125–98). For his general claims about the significance of Greek tragedy as such, see his *Aesthetics* (Hegel, 1975: 1208–22).
- 14 Newman defines 'theoretical violence' as follows: 'As I am using the term, theoretical violence refers to the use of rational argument to justify or normalize the domination or elimination of a perceived adversary' (Newman, 1994: 156).
- 15 My argument here is similar to Benhabib's when she identifies Hegel's argument about women as contrary to his own insistence on the nature of spirit as self-determining, though I do not agree with Benhabib that Hegel is consistently violating his own presuppositions in his account of women in either the *Phenomenology* or *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Benhabib, 1996a: 32–4).

Chapter 5 Hegel and Feminist Ethics

- 1 Chodorow herself sees the transcendence of this pattern of sexual difference as desirable. Her answer to the question of how to get beyond fixed gendered identities and power relations which accompany them is to change the practices of child-rearing to open up the possibilities for infants and children of both sexes to alternative, non-gendered patterns of attachment and identification (Chodorow, 1978).
- 2 Problems of interpreting women's role in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* are discussed in chapter 4 and are returned to again in chapter 6.

Chapter 6 Hegel and the Sexual Contract

- 1 Pateman's argument has not gone uncontested within feminist political theory. Some commentators have defended the social contract theorists against Pateman's critique, arguing that thinkers such as Locke and Rousseau are less patriarchal in their theory than Pateman claims. Pateman's argument has also been charged with relying on guesswork or inconsistency in order to fill in the missing sections of the social/sexual contract story (Butler, 1991; Lange, 1991; Green, 1995: 49–51; Coole, 1990). As will be noted below, Pateman has also been accused of essentializing women within her argument (Diprose, 1994: 5–9).
- 2 I have made clear in previous chapters that I by no means absolve Hegel of the charge of wilful prejudice against women (see chapter 4). Here, as previously, I am arguing against the view that there is any *necessary* connection between Hegel's philosophical argument in general and his patriarchal assertions about women.

Conclusion

- 1 Similar claims to the ones I am making here have been made by Brod in his characterization of a Hegelian-inspired feminism as incorporating the following themes: 'the dialectic between individual consciousness and social structure, a thoroughly historical epistemology, a non-dualistic metaphysics, an understanding of gender, class and other differences as being constituted through interaction rather than consisting of isolated "roles," the priority of political over moralistic or economic theory, a probing of the relations between state power and cultural hegemony, a program for reaching unity through difference rather than through sameness, a tolerance of if not preference for ambiguity and contradiction, and an orientation toward process over end product' (Brod, 1992: 178–9, quoted from Brod, 1988).

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'Hegel was a misogynist. Yet his philosophy fiercely opposed the same one-sided binary thinking (culture/nature, universal/particular) that is the critical object of feminist thought. In this limpid and elegant study, Kimberly Hutchings shows how the binaries of the tradition continue to haunt contemporary feminist philosophy, and argues that Hegelianism uniquely contains the resources for dissolving the sources of theoretical violence. A provocative and trenchant plea for an Hegelian feminism.'

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Hegel and Feminist Philosophy traces the legacy of Hegel in the work of thinkers such as de Beauvoir, Irigaray and Butler, and also in contemporary debates in feminist ethics and political philosophy. As Hutchings demonstrates, this is an ambivalent legacy. Hegel figures both as an antagonistic 'other' and as a significant resource for feminist thinking. His philosophy is antagonistic to feminism in so far as it excludes women from both reason and history, yet at the same time his account of reason and history is fundamentally non-binary and can be drawn on in feminist philosophy's attempts to escape the binary thinking of the philosophical tradition. Hutchings suggests that Hegelian elements within feminist thought provide the basis for a rethinking of feminist philosophy, thus opening up new possibilities for feminism. This is demonstrated by showing how Hegelian modes of thinking help to resolve entrenched debates over sexual difference, ethical judgement and equality of right.

This book will be of great interest to students and scholars of philosophy, women's studies and political theory.

Kimberly Hutchings is a senior lecturer in the Politics Department at the University of Edinburgh

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